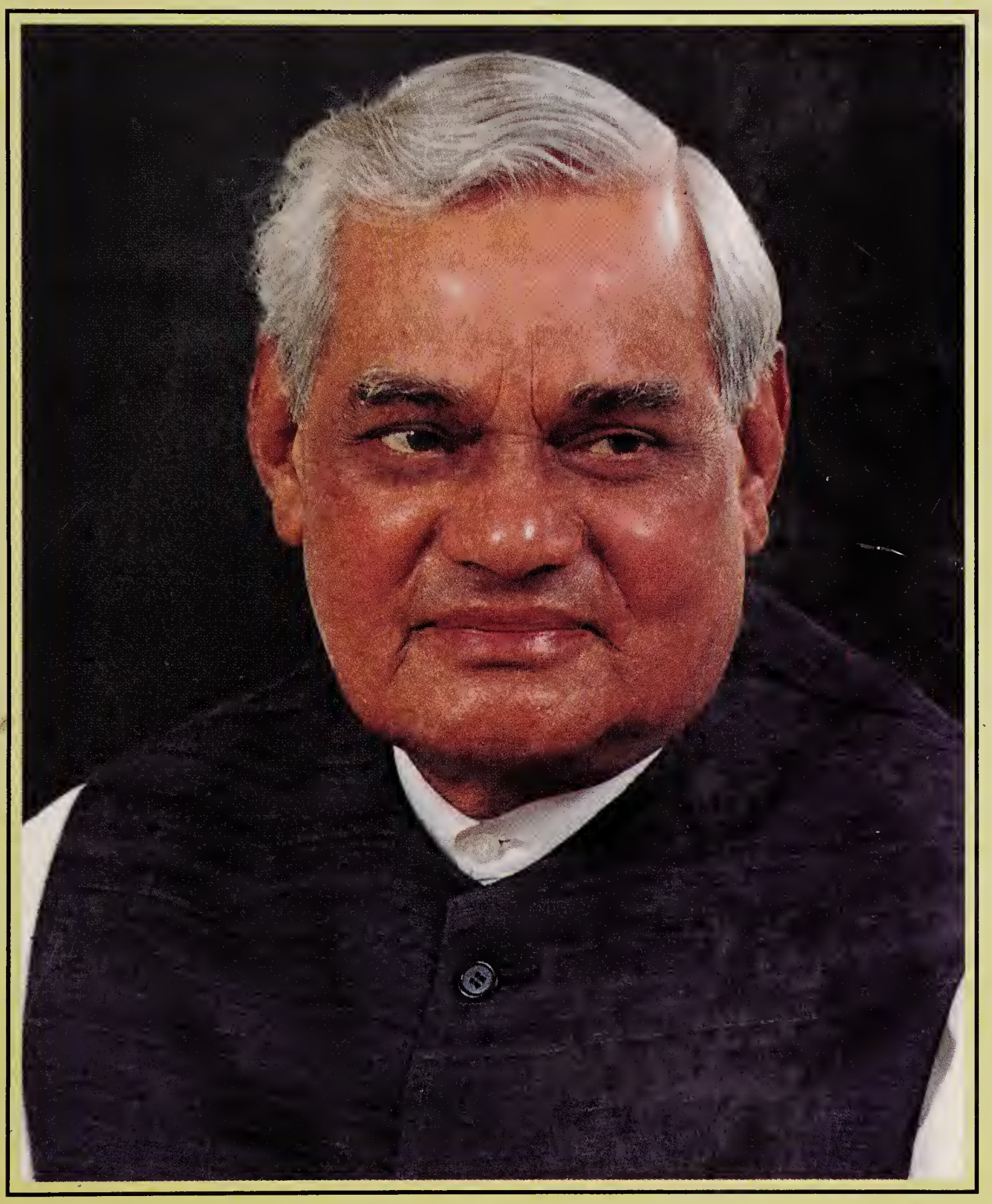
# PRIME MINISTER

# ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE

## SELECTED SPEECHES



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Volume-III

April 2000 to March 2001

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VOLUME III

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# I

# National Affairs

# Lend a Helping Hand

LARGE AREAS OF Gujarat and Rajasthan, and some other parts of the country are in the grip of a severe drought. Crops have withered away, water resources have dried up, there is no fodder for cattle.

In village after village, hunger stalks men, women and children.

More than five crore people have been affected by the drought. They can only stare at the parched earth and hope that this year the monsoon will not elude them.

But the rains are still months away.

We cannot leave our own brothers and sisters at the mercy of their fate or the cruelty of vagaries of nature. At this moment, they need our help to tide over the calamity that has fallen upon them, to survive hunger and disease, to rebuild their lives and to save their cattle that often are their only wealth.

The Union Government has been releasing funds from the National Fund for Calamity Relief and other schemes.

However, given the severity of the drought and the large number of people and cattle who need to be provided with food and fodder, these funds are inadequate. You can help meet the shortage by contributing money, no matter how small the amount, to the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund.

Last year, it was your assistance that enabled us to meet the challenge posed by the super cyclone that devastated coastal Orissa. I am confident that this time, too, you shall come forward to lend a helping hand to your brothers and sisters in Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Together, we can overcome this challenge.

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Address to the nation, New Delhi, 23 April 2000

# A Common Approach to Economic Reforms

I AM GREATLY encouraged and enthused by the constructive and co-operative spirit shown during deliberations in the today's Sixth Meeting of the Inter-State Council. It is heartening that a healthy tradition of consensual approach on vital issues is slowly developing in the country which will go a long way in building up better harmony and partnership between the Centre and the States.

The States have brought into focus the strains which nearly all States are suffering owing to ever increasing financial burden, the scarcity of resources, the rising scale of expectations of development, growth, access to services. The problem cannot be solved by shifting the burden from one platform to another but by sharing it. You are aware of efforts, with your co-operation, that the Union Government is making to create a new viable, sustainable paradigm of financial regime. Clearly the immediate challenge is to cope with the Fiscal Regime. I am of the view that this can be done not by dividing the existing pie in thousand different ways but adding to the pie. Let us do it together.

There is a consensus in the country on Economic Reforms. We are midway through the process. Whether a party is in government or outside, we should have a common approach to cope with issues of Economic Reforms and growth and strengthen the process. The country is passing through the phase of globalization of economy. Unless we equip our fiscal system to deal with the new challenges ahead, we would lag behind. Necessary measures have been taken by us to improve our financial system by introduction of uniform floor rate of sales tax and the decision to switch over to the value added tax system from next year onwards. I must congratulate the

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Concluding remarks at the Sixth Meeting of the Inter-State Council, New Delhi, 20 May 2000

State Governments for taking necessary initiatives in this direction. I feel what is required is better financial discipline and adopting strategies for further growth with a view to achieving better life for our people.

We have been able to achieve consensus in certain vital areas in today's meeting. The provisions contained in Articles 256 and 257 are important for the unity of the country, but it will have to be ensured that these provisions are not misused, I am sure the Sub-Committee under the Convenership of Union Defence Minister will be able to evolve a suitable strategy and consensus to achieve the objective.

On the important subject of delay in States Bill, I share the concern expressed by the State Governments and strongly feel that there should be a time-bound clearance of these Bills both by the Governor and the President. I will request the Union Ministries to give due priority for clearance of these Bills as and when received. But as agreed, we have to go beyond that and bring about constitutional sanction to these changes through amendments.

*Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the Sixth Meeting of the Inter-State Council, New Delhi, 20 May 2000*

Inter-State Council is a useful forum for frank and useful discussions on important issues. I would invite the State Governments and Ministries to increasingly make use of this forum by suggesting new issues concerning inter-state relations for discussion, in the true spirit of federalism.

The valuable suggestions made by the Hon'ble Chief Ministers on various other subjects including agriculture, industry have been taken note of and I would request my colleagues in the Ministries concerned to give due weightage to these suggestions for implementation.

I take this opportunity to thank once again the Hon'ble Chief Ministers, representatives of the States and all the Members of the Inter-State Council of making the deliberations in today's meeting so constructive and meaningful.

# Together Let us Build a Stronger Nation

MY HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS to all of you on the anniversary of our Independence. Wherever you may be—at the highest mountain peaks of the Himalayas or on the shores of the Indian Ocean; on the desert sands of Rajasthan or in the green jungles of the North East, may my greetings reach all of you.

Today is also the festival of Raksha Bandhan. The power of friendship can transform even a simple hand-spun thread into an unbreakable relationship. On this auspicious occasion, I extend my good wishes to all of you, especially to all my sisters.

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Free rendering of the speech in Hindi from the ramparts of the Red Fort on Independence Day, Delhi, 15 August 2000

This is the first Independence Day of the new century. While looking back at the century just past, we must work hard to convert the challenges of the new century into opportunities.

We must make our Independence last forever. We must reiterate, today, our resolve to defend our nation.

Today is a day of sacred remembrance. It is a moment for introspection. We offer our heartfelt gratitude to all the known and unknown martyrs. The memory of their martyrdom will forever live on in our hearts. Their sacrifices will always inspire us.

Today, we especially remember Mahatma Gandhiji. He was not only the foremost leader of our Freedom Struggle, but he was also among the greatest personalities of the 20th century.

On today's auspicious day, we extend our greetings to the people of all the countries in the world. We wish that the 21st century would bring the message of peace, fraternity, cooperation, and steady progress for the entire world.

Today, we send our best wishes to millions of Non-Resident Indians and Persons of Indian Origin living in other countries. Wherever they may live, they are always emotionally attached to India. We wish all of them success and prosperity.

Today, I extend my felicitations to the people of the three new States that have found their place on the map of India after the reorganization of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar. We are confident that the new States of Chhattisgarh, Uttaranchal, and Jharkhand will soon earn their rightful place in the Union of India.

We have succeeded in our commitment of creating these three new States. After the formation of these States, we have to work together for their development so that they become shining examples of success.

The new century is a Century of the Youth. India, too, which has lived for thousands of years, has now become a young nation. Nearly seventy per cent of our population is less than the age of 35. These young men and women are more ambitious, more aware, and more active than their predecessors. They not only think big, but they also work hard to realize their dreams.

I have full faith in India's youth, it is our responsibility to fully support our young men and women in building a bright future for themselves and their Motherland.

Dear Countrymen, last year when I had addressed you from the ramparts of this very Red Fort, our country was going through an extraordinary situation. The Lok Sabha had been dissolved and fresh elections announced. It was in these circumstances, that we had to face the aggression in Kargil. And India emerged victorious in this war.

One year later, democracy has become stronger in the country. India's international standing has risen. Our voice is being heard attentively in the capitals of the world.

India is on the move. An India full of self-confidence is marching forward on the path to progress.

It is an India that is as determined to win against all adversities as were our brave jawans and airmen who drove back the enemy's forces.

Our hearts are filled with ever-lasting gratitude towards the brave soldiers of the Kargil and all previous wars.

Pakistan would be committing a terrible folly if it thinks that it can secure anything through the undeclared war that it has been waging against India. Kashmir has been an unbreakable part of India, and it will remain so.

Our neighbour must realize that the clock cannot be turned back. I would advise the rulers and also the people of Pakistan

to pay heed to the following verse from the lyricist, Sahir Ludhianvi:

वह वक्त गया, वह दौर गया,
जब दो कौमों का नारा था;
वे लोग गए इस धरती से
जिनका मकसद बंटवारा था!
अब एक हैं सब हिन्दुस्तानी,

अब एक हैं सब हिन्दुस्तानी,
यह जान ले सारा हिन्दुस्तान
यह जान ले सारा जहान!
यह जान ले सारा जहान!

*Gone is that time, gone is that age,*
*When "Two Nations " was the slogan;*
*Gone are those people—*
*Whose purpose was Partition!*

*One, now, are all Indians,*
*One, now, are all Indians,*
*Oh India, know this!*

*Oh World, know this!*
*Oh World, know this!*

The 21st century does not permit the redrawing of borders either in the name of religion or on the strength of the sword. This is the age for resolving differences, not for prolonging disputes.

The people of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh are tired of violence and bloodshed. They are craving for peace. We need to apply the salve of brotherhood on the wounded body of Jammu and Kashmir.

That is why, I recently said that India is prepared to apply the balm for Kashmir's agony within the framework of *Insaniyat* (humanity).

The world knows who has derailed the move to end hostilities and to start the peace process. The world knows who has torpedoed these efforts.

On the one hand, Pakistan says it is willing to participate in talks. On the other hand, it continues to be deeply involved in violence, killings, and cross-border terrorism. Activities of the terrorists and proposals for peace talks cannot go together.

India's willingness and ability to deal firmly with violence, terrorism, extremism, and separatism should not be underestimated.

Dear Countrymen, we have to build a magnificent nation. There is no other country in the world, which is so ancient, so big, so populous, and so rich in diversities; that has preserved its democracy, its unity, and its culture; and that is fast emerging as a modern and prosperous nation.

We have achieved success, too, in this endeavour. Every section of our society has contributed to this success.

In the present times, India is called upon to pursue two major imperatives. These are: Security and Development. They are complementary to each other. Without security, there can be no development; without development, our security is incomplete.

Now we have to make determined efforts to meet the economic challenges before the nation. We have to accelerate and broaden our development process, so that no child of Mother India remains hungry, homeless, unemployed, or is without access to medical care.

We have to reduce regional and social disparities.

We have to make our brethren belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and minorities equal partners in our developmental process.

Therefore, let us together resolve to make this decade, the Decade of Development.

To realize this goal, we have decided to achieve the target of doubling India's per capita income in the next ten years.

Dear Countrymen, to achieve this ambitious target, we have to undertake many important reforms in our economy. At the same time, we need to implement necessary reforms in our administration, our judiciary, in education, and in other areas.

Reforms are the need of the hour. For example, the world has changed much in the last fifty years; and so has India. There have been many far-reaching political and economic transformations throughout the globe.

To reform is to turn the inevitability of change in the direction of progress.

To reform is to improve the life of every citizen.

Take for example, the reforms in the power sector that the Centre and various State Governments are presently carrying out. These will reduce the losses of our electricity boards, stop the theft of power, and ensure adequate availability of power for increasing production and employment.

Similarly, the reforms that we are implementing in the telecom sector will enable us to provide cheaper telephones, mobile phones, and Internet services in all parts of the country.

There is no scope for either apprehension or fear about our economic reforms. I remember that some people had expressed similar fears even during the Green Revolution. These fears later proved to be baseless.

The perspective of our economic reforms is based on our own concept. You know that almost all political parties have, at different times, and in different ways at the Centre and in different States, been adopting the economic reforms programme.

I urge our farmers, workers, other producers, industrialists, and our intelligentsia to contribute to building a consensus in favour of the economic reforms.

In this connection, I would like to express my special appreciation to all the central trade unions. I met their leaders three days ago, and we had a very constructive dialogue. They have withdrawn their proposed nation-wide strike. The interests of our workers will be fully taken into account in the economic reform process.

This year, the Government is going to take many big and important steps to accelerate our economic and social development and bring its benefits to the largest number of people.

I wish to congratulate our farmers for ensuring that we have not faced a scarcity of foodgrains despite a rapidly rising population. Today, there is no shortage of food; rather there is a shortage of facilities to store our food stocks.

We have formulated a National Agriculture Policy for the first time since Independence. This Policy aims to increase agricultural production by four percent every year. Concrete steps would be taken to check the declining investments in the agricultural sector and to facilitate increase in these investments.

For the first time since Independence, the Central Government has devised a well-conceived and time-bound programme for rural roads. This hundred per cent Centrally sponsored scheme, which is called the "Prime Minister's Rural Roads Scheme", aims to connect, within the next three years, every village that has a population of more than one thousand, through good all-weather roads. In the next seven years, every village with a population of more than five hundred will be similarly connected. For this project, the Central Government is making a provision of Rs. 5,000 crore in its first year. It will be launched on Gandhi Jayanti this year.

The National Highway Development Project is an ambitious one. A four-lane Golden Quadrilateral connecting Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta, and Chennai will be ready by 2003. The North-South and East-West corridors will be ready by 2007.

Khadi, village industries, and small-scale industries are the backbone of India's economy. We would like the benefits of economic reforms to reach them too. There will be a national convention of small-scale and cottage industries on the 30th of this month, where we shall announce many important decisions.

In a very short time, India has become a strong power in Information Technology. In software exports alone, India is expected to have exports of more than Rs. 2,00,000 crore by 2008. Through this, lakhs of educated persons are likely to get attractive employment opportunities, both in India and abroad.

To reach the benefits of Information Technology to the common people, our Government has taken many important decisions in the last two years, and will take many more in future.

I want to see every school and every village to have access to computers and the Internet in as less time as possible.

We are committed to ensuring that every village and hamlet gets access to clean drinking water in the next four years. This year, the allocation for the scheme has been increased by Rs. 2,000 crore and its implementation will be intensified.

Before the end of this year, the Government will announce an Integrated National Health Policy, the aim of which will be to quickly achieve "Health For All". The policy will also ensure that every citizen is provided with primary health care. Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy will be given their rightful place.

Recently, the rapidly spreading disease of HIV/AIDS has become a grave challenge to our nation. I appeal to all sections of society to fully participate in building awareness about this epidemic. They should also make necessary changes in their behaviour so that this disease can be controlled.

The most valuable investment that we can make in India's future is to ensure that every child gets education. We have decided that by 2010, every Indian child will get education up to class eight. We have launched *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*

(Education for All campaign) to achieve this goal. Education until graduation has been made free for women. All poor families should take advantage of this.

Science and technology have become the main engine of economic growth. We should ensure that every vehicle of economic development is equipped with this engine. Towards this end, the Government is taking concrete steps to remove the gap between academia and industry.

Dear Countrymen, a bright future is knocking at India's door. We can, however, realize this future to the extent that we are able to further strengthen our national unity, secularism, social goodwill, and our democratic system.

India is a land of diversities. We have, in ample measure, geographical diversities; linguistic diversities; religious diversities; and diversities in customs and traditions. Despite these diversities, or perhaps because of them, India has always remained united.

We are one in many, and many in one. The whole world is amazed at how India has successfully sustained this magic not just today, but for many millennia.

This may be magic for the rest of the world; but for Indians, it is life itself.

Religious intolerance and hate have never been part of India's liberal culture. I appeal to the people of all faiths and castes not to create imaginary enemies, and not to resort to the path of using the sword that inflicts wounds on oneself.

Recently, a few unfortunate incidents have spoiled communal peace and goodwill, in some places. The Government will not tolerate the activities of any organization that spreads communal discord or incites violence.

As Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar said, our independence is incomplete without social justice. In the new century, India needs more social justice. However, that kind of social justice

*(Samajik Nyay)* is needed which also promotes social harmony *(Samajik Samarasata)*.

The policy of reservations is one of the important guarantors of social justice for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. The problem of backlog in reservations was persisting for some time. Recently, we amended the Constitution and solved this problem.

Women are the backbone of our social system and culture. Our dreams of India's future can only be realized if our women are educated, are made economically prosperous, are empowered politically, and are enabled to play a bigger role in society.

We have promised to provide reservations to women in the Parliament and the State Legislatures. There is now a need to quickly bring about a consensus to implement this revolutionary idea. I have had several opportunities to meet many women who have become members and chairpersons of panchayats and municipalities by winning from reserved seats. They have, through their performance, proved that they are not second to men, either in the democratic process or in administration.

The North-Eastern States have a special place in the nation's life and in India's development. The implementation of developmental projects and programmes has been suffering from many hurdles. Now, a special cell has been created in the Prime Minister's Office to remove these hurdles and speed up the developmental process. This cell will closely monitor the developmental works in the region. There has been an improvement in the situation, thanks to the cooperation of the people and State Governments of this region.

It is sad that the biggest impediment to faster development in the North-East has been the extremist organizations that are fomenting violence and trouble in the region. I appeal to the leaders and followers of these organizations to give up this

dangerous and futile path. The Government is presently engaged in talks with some organizations in the region so that peace and development can be restored in the North-East. I am confident that these efforts will bear fruit.

India is a Union of States. Our States have an important role to play in ensuring that the fruits of development reach every Indian home. We are committed to decentralization of power. We have decided to give our States more financial and administrative powers. We would like our Panchayati Raj institutions to also benefit from decentralization of power, so that their functioning becomes more efficient and effective. We have taken concrete steps in this direction.

In the last two-and-a-half years, we have made continuous efforts to increase dialogue and coordination between the Centre and the State Governments. All States have contributed to this process. This has improved cooperation and concord between the Centre and the States. Consequently, there has been an increasing convergence in our viewpoints and goals. For this, I thank all the State Governments and their Chief Ministers.

We shall intensify our campaign against corruption in high places. Our country cannot make expected progress in development without probity in administration and in public life.

One of the big failings in our national life has been that people expect the Government to solve even those problems, which they could easily resolve through their collective efforts. The Government, after all, has limited resources. In addition, experience has shown us that, those programmes which are implemented without people's participation, rarely yield the expected results.

Let me illustrate. Be it population stabilization or dealing with natural calamities, conserving water and electricity, or keeping our public places clean and beautiful—all these initiatives can succeed only when our citizens participate enthusiastically and in an organized manner.

Dear Countrymen, on the first Independence Day of the

21st century, let us draw inspiration from all the good and glorious aspects of our past. However, let us not become obsessed with the past.

I have been emphasizing repeatedly that India should turn its attention to the challenges and opportunities of the future. We should not be stuck in the contentious issues of the past.

Come, let us look to the future. We have to create a prosperous, self-reliant, and self-confident India. Indeed, we have already embarked along this path. We will march further in this direction. We are being counted among the ranks of successful nations.

We must not stop. Rather, we must step up the speed of our journey.

I call upon our farmers, workers, artisans, employees, youth, and, indeed, all our citizens, to make their contribution to a happy and prosperous India.

I ask our entrepreneurs to hoist the flag of their capabilities and prowess and demonstrate to the rest of the world that Indian industrialists are second to none in any competition.

I appeal to the Non-Resident Indians to contribute their fullest to this momentous task.

I exhort our scientists and engineers that they scale new heights of knowledge and science to earn a bright name for themselves and their country.

I appeal to India's sportspersons that they take our tricolor to triumphant positions in the arena of international sports.

The entire nation sends its best wishes to our sports contingent that is taking part in next month's Olympic Games at Sydney.

Come, let all of us contribute our mite to the creation of a *Parishrami Bharat* (industrious India), *Parakrami Bharat* (achieving India), and a *Vijayi Bharat* (winning India).

Our motto for all ages has been:

**सम् गच्छद्वम्**
**सम् वदद्वम्**
**सम् वो मनासी जानताम्**

*Let us walk together*
*Let us speak in one voice*
*Let our hearts beat together*

In other words, let us march forward united—all of us together, and taking everybody together.

Let us make the 21st Century, India's Century. This is our resolve. This is our aspiration.

# Strengthening Transparency in Governance

ONE YEAR AGO, the people of India reposed their faith in the National Democratic Alliance. I thank my countrymen for giving my government and me an opportunity to serve Mother India.

The people voted for stability and good governance. Their mandate was an expression of their collective desire to make India a prosperous and proud nation in the 21st century. In the past twelve months, we have endeavoured to fulfil their aspirations. Our democracy is steadily growing in maturity to prove that a coalition government at the Centre can be stable and successful. The India at the beginning of the new century is an India that stands stronger, prouder and taller than before. India is now seen

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Statement on completion of one year of NDA Government, Mumbai, 13 October 2000

as an emerging global player whose voice is being heard with recognition and respect in the capitals of the world.

We have fulfilled several promises contained in our common manifesto. It shall be our earnest endeavour to fulfil many more that are still unaccomplished.

Our governance has been free of corruption scandals, and we are determined to further strengthen standards of transparency in Government and probity in public life. Centre-State relations have become harmonious. The situation in Jammu & Kashmir and in the North-East is improving steadily. I am confident that it will improve further in the coming months. Simultaneously, the circle of international support for our stand on Kashmir is expanding rapidly. Our fight against terrorism continues—and shall continue—till the terrorist's gun falls silent.

Our economy is growing steadily. We are now removing the hurdles for its faster growth, so that we can achieve our ambitious target of doubling the per capita income by the end of this decade. The number of people living below the poverty line has declined. Food security is no longer a distant dream. I want to assure the people that the economic reforms we have initiated have no other aim than to create employment for all and bring the fruits of prosperity for all—especially to those who have so far been deprived of it.

These are the achievements not of any party or alliance, but of a nation on the move. They have been made possible by the close bond between the people and the Government. I want to urge all my countrymen to further strengthen this bond, so that India can move from success to greater success in the coming years.

The path of reforms is never easy or straight. Sometimes, the Government has to take hard decisions in the long-term interests of the nation. For example, the unprecedented increase in global oil prices has forced us to pass on some of the burden to the consumers. We have to face such challenges collectively. The haves must bear a greater share of the burden than the have-nots in the transition period.

As my Government completes one year in office today, I look more to the future than to the past. I urge my countrymen to do the same. India's greatest asset is her unity in diversity. Let us together strengthen our unity, by creating greater tolerance and respect for our linguistic, ethnic, regional and religious diversity. Today, there is greater social cohesion and communal peace, for which I compliment people belonging to all communities. We must now make it a permanent feature of our national life. I see an atmosphere of self-confidence and hope in the country. Let us make this, too, a permanent feature of our national life.

Let us remember that the gift of a prosperous and happy future is available only to that nation whose people make themselves deserving of it with their hard work, discipline and mutual cooperation.

I assure my countrymen that the Government will do its duty in a fair, impartial and determined manner. I urge every Indian to do his or her duty as responsible and aware citizens.

Together, we shall overcome the challenges facing the country. Together, we shall take India to a better position next year.

# Babasaheb Ambedkar—A Crusader for Human Dignity

TOMORROW IS THE 44th Mahaparinirvaan Diwas (death anniversary) of Bharat Ratna Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, the principal architect of our Constitution and one of the greatest social reformers of modern India. I join my countrymen in paying my sincere homage to the memory of Dr. Ambedkar.

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Speech on the eve of 44th death anniversary of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, New Delhi, 5 December 2000

Dr. Ambedkar's ceaseless and lifelong struggle for human dignity and equal rights of the Depressed Classes created a new awakening in Indian society. As a result, the SCs, STs and OBCs are steadily realising the cherished goals of political empowerment, social justice and economic development. While we have made much progress in this direction, a lot more still needs to be done. This cannot be done by the Government's efforts alone. All sections of society, especially those belonging to wealthy and privileged classes, must strive fully for the realization of the ideals that guided Dr. Ambedkar's life.

As far as the Government is concerned, I take this opportunity to once again reiterate that neither will there be any contraction in the reservations for SCs, STs and OBCs, nor

*Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee paying homage to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar on his 44th Death Anniversary, New Delhi, 6 December 2000*

is there any move to alter the basic structure of the Constitution.

On Ambedkar Jayanti (April 14) this year, the Union Government decided to erect a befitting memorial to Dr. Ambedkar at a suitable location in Maharashtra. The Centre would actively consider any consensual proposal for the creation of such a memorial near Chaityabhoomi, Mumbai, where Dr. Ambedkar was cremated. I am confident that the Government of Maharashtra, the trustees of Chaityabhoomi, and others will fully cooperate with the Centre in this endeavour.

# Election Commission—A Neutral Umpire of Elections

TODAY IS A proud day for that pre-eminent institution of our Republic, which we are all proud of. The Golden Jubilee of the Election Commission of India is truly a golden moment in the history of our democracy.

India built many institutions after attaining freedom and adopting a Republican Constitution. Each of them has served the cause of the nation in its own distinguished way. But if anyone were to conduct an opinion poll on which of these institutions has rendered the best service to Indian democracy with the highest degree of integrity, I have no doubt in my mind that the Election Commission of India will be the our people's first choice.

India has seen thirteen Parliamentary elections and many more elections to State Assemblies in the past fifty years. In each of them, some have won; others have lost. Nevertheless,

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Speech at the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Election Commission, New Delhi, 17 January 2001

there has been one permanent winner in all these elections. It is the Election Commission of India.

Not once in the past five decades has the outcome of a single parliamentary election been questioned. Not once during the past thirteen elections has the transfer of power been anything but smooth. The same is true about the change of government in States.

The Commission has truly performed the role of neutral umpire and a referee during elections without any fear or favour. It has established a healthy tradition of restraining the ruling parties from taking any unfair advantage during elections and providing a truly level playing field for the electoral contests. In holding regular elections, the Commission has confronted and managed very difficult situations in some of the States, which were affected by insurgency, serious law and order problems, and disturbances by terrorists and militants.

People abroad often wonder how India pulls off the miracle of managing a general election involving an electorate of over 620 million, over 750,000 polling stations, almost four million election staff, and over a million civil security personnel.

Their sense of wonder turns into disbelief when they are told that the Commission has been managing the largest democratic election of the world with a core staff of less than three hundred at its Secretariat.

Elections in India are not an ordinary event. They are the Maha Kumbh, I am repeating Dr. Gill, they are the Maha Kumbh of our democracy. And like the Kumbh, they too are an expression and a celebration of our people's faith—their unshakeable faith in our democracy. The commission has proved itself more than worthy of the enormous faith reposed in it by the Founding Fathers of our Constitution, the political spectrum, the judiciary, and the people at large. Equally important, the Commission has enhanced India's reputation in the eyes of the global community.

Therefore, I join all my countrymen today in warmly felicitating the Chief Election Commissioner, his brother Commissioners, all their distinguished predecessors, and the entire staff of the Commission on this special occasion.

Friends, today is an occasion of, as Hon'ble Speaker has emphasized on this point, celebration for the Election Commission and of introspection for our democracy. We need to comprehensively review the experience of the past 50 years, learn from our achievements as well as our failures, and prepare a reliable roadmap for the future.

There is much in our democratic system that makes any Indian hold his head high. At the same time, there is also much in it that fills our minds with concern and anguish.

I must emphasize here that the drawbacks in our democracy are not because of the Election Commission. Dr. Gill need not worry. Rather, they have been created and sustained by the system as a whole.

Hence, it is the systematic change that we need to address.

I have had the privilege of closely watching all the 13 elections so far—as a campaigner in the first one, and as a candidate in all the subsequent ones.

I am, however, dismayed by the fact that elections are becoming increasingly contentious as time goes by.

In their bid to win, political parties and candidates often cross the norms of proper conduct, which is so essential for preserving and strengthening the culture of our democracy.

डा० गिल ने लक्ष्मण रेखा की बात की थी। मैं उन्हें बताना चाहता हूं कि लक्ष्मण हमारे पास हैं, आप रेखा खींच दें, हम उसका पालन करेंगे।

(Dr. Gill said about *Laxman Rekha*. I would like to tell him that Laxman is with us. You draw the line, we will not cross it.)

Truth often become a casualty as the campaign becomes more shrill.

Allegations replace voter education, which ought to be the true function of an election campaign.

Indeed, ordinary people are more interested in knowing about issues, platforms, and performances of various contestants, rather than in accusations and counter-accusations.

I will probably echo the concern of all our countrymen when I say that the growing menace of money and muscle power has come to pose the greatest challenge to India's democracy.

Elections are becoming prohibitively costly.

So much so, that, ordinary political activists, in spite of having an extraordinary record of public service, find it difficult even to dream of contesting elections.

Even established political parties are finding it ever harder to garner requisite resources.

This situation increases the dependence of both candidates and parties on moneybags, with all the attendant negative influences on the polity.

What makes this dependence tighter is the occurrence of frequent and unscheduled elections.

This also adversely affects the quality of governance.

I, therefore, strongly believe that a fixed tenure for our Parliament and State Legislatures is essential for our democratic system to become mature and deliver good governance.

I am happy that the Constitution Review Commission has initiated a public debate on this important issue.

When elections become more contentious and confrontational, it is also natural for criminal and anti-social elements to find a foothold in the electoral process.

This erodes people's confidence in free and fair elections, which are the heart of a democracy.

It is, therefore, high time all political parties evolved a consensus on how to check and reverse the malignant trend of corruption and criminalization in our electoral process.

State funding of elections, on the basis of a transparent formula, has been suggested by many as a workable solution.

This and many other reforms have been debated for a long time by several committees, including the ones headed by the late Dinesh Goswami and by Shri Indrajit Gupta.

The Law Commission has also made several important recommendations on electoral reforms.

It has now become necessary to take a holistic view of these reforms and implement them urgently.

Yet another issue that is awaiting consensus among political parties for a long time is the Women's Reservation Bill.

I am happy that the Election Commission has made a constructive suggestion to break the deadlock in the matter.

Unfortunately, there is no consensus even on this. However, we cannot go back on our commitment on women's empowerment.

This being the Year of Women's Empowerment, it is all the more necessary that we soon evolve some acceptable formula to achieve our fundamental objective.

The Government has an open mind to consider any constructive proposal in this regard.

Friends, although I have mentioned some of the shortcomings in our democratic experience in the past five decades, let no one doubt that our pluses outweigh our minuses.

The inherent strengths of our democracy fill us with the self-confidence that we can indeed remove the weaknesses.

In this endeavour, the Election Commission has been performing its task with aplomb.

It is now the duty of the Government, and political parties, people's organizations, and the media to discharge our part of the responsibility to give India a reformed and rejuvenated democratic system that can meet the challenges of the new century and fulfill the growing aspirations of all our citizens.

Once again, my hearty congratulations to the Election Commission of India on completing half a century of glorious service to our Republic.

# Strengthen Institutional Mechanism to Check Corruption

IT GIVES ME great pleasure to be with you this morning to inaugurate the Sixth All-India Conference of Lokayuktas and Up-Lokayuktas. The subjects that you will deliberate on, are vital to our national life.

Corruption is the biggest hurdle in the path of development. The worst victims of corruption in administration and governance are the common people. Over the years, successive governments at the Centre and in the States have spent tens of thousands of crores of rupees on various programmes and schemes.

Had these resources been spent properly, and without leakage at various levels, we would have long solved many

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Speech at the Sixth Conference of Lokayuktas and Up-Lokayuktas, New Delhi, 22 January 2001

of our problems in education, healthcare, housing, and other areas of social development. We would have also removed many bottlenecks in our infrastructure, which are today exacting a heavy price on our economy. Above all, we would have been able to make a deeper dent in poverty and unemployment, which have robbed millions of our countrymen of their right to a decent life.

Corruption is not only an enemy of development. It is also a foe of democracy. The absence of transparency and accountability in governance and administration, and our people's sense of helplessness, weakens our democratic process. A mature democracy must have effective checks and balances against abuse of power by public servants for self-enrichment.

Over the past few decades, rampant corruption has bred contempt for the law. The failure of the law to catch the corrupt and then to deliver deterrent punishment to them has led to widespread cynicism among the people. It has also resulted in a decline in moral values throughout society.

It is the consistent endeavour of our Government to provide clean, efficient, and transparent administration. The drive against corruption in public life has to be a continuing process. Our commitment in this regard is strongly articulated in the common agenda of the National Democratic Alliance. We have pledged to give the people a stable, honest, and corruption-free government, capable of delivering all-round development. We have further committed that the principle of "Zero Tolerance" would apply while dealing with corruption.

The independent institutions of the Lokpal at the Centre and the Lokayukta at the States were envisaged to deal with this problem. They were visualized to be non-political, with their status comparable to the highest judicial functionaries in the country. These institutions were to provide an independent forum, where the people could take their allegations of corruption and administrative excesses, and seek quick and effective redressal.

However, this mechanism of redressal has not lived up to the people's expectations, although I must hasten to add that, this is not the fault of the Lokayuktas. For example, only yesterday, I read in the newspapers about the findings of an Administrative Reforms Commission in Karnataka, which presented some startling figures. Between 1986 and 2000, the Lokayukta in the State ordered investigation in 2,840 cases. Of these, 1,677 were charge-sheeted. However, only six percent of these cases resulted in conviction. As many as 1,118 cases are still pending trial.

The experience in other States may not be very different. The time has come, therefore, to seriously review the working of the Lokayuktas so far. We should identify the deficiencies in the legislation, and drawbacks in implementation. The States should not hesitate to take necessary corrective action, since the very credibility of our shared commitment to fight corruption is at stake.

Today, only about fifteen States have a Lokayukta. I understand that in some of them, the Chief Minister falls within the ambit of the Lokayukta. In others, the Chief Minister is outside its purview. Similarly, there is lack of uniformity in the jurisdiction of the Lokayuktas over members of the State Legislatures. I think that the Lokayukta legislation should be uniform on all such aspects. I would like this Conference to consider this matter and initiate necessary action in this direction.

The Centre has taken many steps to strengthen the institutional mechanism to check corruption and to ensure probity in public life. The Central Vigilance Commission Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on December 20, 1999. This provided for the constitution of a Central Vigilance Commission to inquire, or cause inquiries to be conducted into, offences alleged to have been committed under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 by certain categories of public servants.

A Joint Committee of Parliament has already deliberated on various provisions of the Bill and has submitted its report. The government is examining the recommendations of this Committee.

As regards the setting up of a Lokpal at the Centre, several attempts were made in the past to enact an enabling legislation. These did not yield desired results as most of the earlier Lokpal Bills lapsed consequent upon the dissolution of the respective Lok Sabhas. Our Government had committed to the people in the National Agenda for Governance, that we would enact the Lokpal Bill with adequate powers to deal with charges of corruption against anyone, including the Prime Minister.

We stand committed to this promise. A Group of Ministers has been working on a new draft of the Lokpal Bill. This will be introduced in Parliament soon.

To ensure that free flow of information is available to the public, the Government has already introduced the Freedom of Information Bill, 2000 in the Lok Sabha. This has been referred to a Select Committee. When enacted, it will go a long way in bringing in greater transparency in governance.

Several ministries, departments, and organizations of the Central Government that deal extensively with the public have introduced Citizens' Charters. These indicate the quality of service the public are entitled to. I would like the information about this initiative to be widely publicized. I would also like citizens' organizations to cooperate with the Government in making this initiative successful.

The Centre has also taken up simplification of laws, rules, and procedures for improving the efficiency of its organizations. Towards this end, over forty departments have set up expert Task Forces, or have begun internal exercises. I would like these reforms to be speeded up, so that there is a visible change in the quality and content of administration.

I should add here that the purpose of economic liberalization, besides accelerating our economic growth, has also been to create more openness and accountability in the system. The license-permit-quota raj had created excessive controls and discretionary powers. Mr. Jaitley referred to this. Besides causing inefficiency, these had bred many corrupt practices. While economic reforms have significantly changed this situation, there is still an urgent need to create a hassle-free environment for our businesses, especially small businesses.

Experience has shown that our efforts to strengthen probity in civil service and the polity cannot yield desired results without extending the norms of accountability to the judiciary. The inability of our judicial system to deliver speedy justice has itself become the source of much injustice. It has also eroded the credibility of our judiciary in the eyes of the public.

There is yet another institution, the media, which has a tremendous potential to act as a check against corruption and misuse of power. It can do so by creating mass awareness and mobilizing public opinion. Our media has, by and large, performed this role creditably. However, there have often been times when the media has not been truthful to facts. Maligning persons in political life, without evidence and often on the basis of hearsay, does not help—rather, it hurts—our democracy.

Friends, this Conference is the right forum to introspect on the various aspects of the working of Lokayuktas and devise a strategy for their effective functioning. I assure you that our Government will have an open mind to consider all constructive suggestions to eliminate corruption in public life and strengthen the people's confidence in our institutions.

With these words, I inaugurate this Conference and wish it all success.

# Integrated Approach Must in River Management

I WELCOME YOU to the Tenth Meeting of the National River Conservation Authority.

For us rivers are more than an important source of economic sustenance. They are a source of sustenance of our culture and civilization. They are our nation's lifelines.

In no other part of the world are rivers regarded as so sacred. The River Ganga, for example, represents the flow of India's national life from ancient times into the millennia ahead. Nearly eight crore people took a dip in the Ganga at Allahabad during the just concluded first Mahakumbh. The world has never before seen such a mega celebration of faith and human unity without any distinction of high and low.

Yet, this is only a part—the inspiring part—of the story. The other part is depressing. Most of our rivers today are in a pathetic condition. They have become the repository of every waste, solid or liquid, that is generated in our towns or industries.

You are well aware of the pollution of the Yamuna flowing across Delhi. I have seen, in my younger days, religious congregations on the banks of this river. Several thousands of people used to bathe in it. Today, the river has become a threat to the health of millions of people living along its banks.

The Government had started the Ganga Action Plan in 1985 to create awareness amongst the people and to demonstrate a model to clean a river like the Ganga. I am told that the physical implementation of the first phase of the Ganga Action Plan has been completed quite satisfactorily.

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Speech at the Tenth Meeting of the National River Conservation Authority, New Delhi, 13 March 2001

But the post-implementation operation and maintenance of the assets has turned out to be very unsatisfactory. The performance of some of the participating States leaves a lot to be desired. It has become one of the main reasons of criticism of the programme. This is a matter of serious concern and requires your attention.

The Government's river-cleaning programme has now been extended to the national level. It today covers 27 polluted stretches of major rivers along 149 towns spread over sixteen States. It is estimated to cost Rs.3,080 crore. There have been some delays in its implementation. But these constraints have now been removed and the programme is targeted for completion by 2005. Let us join together in this sacred task and complete it without further slippage.

The Government alone, whether at the Centre or in the States, cannot accomplish this work without the participation of public. I am told that a new initiative has been taken in Tamil Nadu where a scheme covering seven towns has been approved in January 2001 with public participation. Out of the total project cost of Rs. 575 crore, only about 48 percent comes from the Government of India with the balance being shared between local bodies, public, elected representatives, and the State Government. Let us adopt this model in other places as well.

Experience has shown that the success of such schemes depends on an integrated approach covering all aspects of river pollution as well as urban sanitation and waste management. This, in my opinion, will help make the national programme both effective and sustainable.

In the present scenario of growing population and increasing industrial activity, there is no alternative to regular cleaning and conservation of our water resources. This is a gigantic task for a developing country like India. It requires not only the matching resources but a strong political will as

well. Wherever feasible, we should collect user charges from the public. We should also forcefully implement the principle of "Make the Polluter Pay".

We have to ensure that local self-government bodies, which are eventually the custodians of this programme, are adequately strengthened to be on their own feet to make it sustainable. We also need to energize local communities to monitor this programme.

Our country has many devoted NGOs and internationally acclaimed river conservation activists like Shri Veer Bhadra Mishra of Varanasi. We should actively involve them in our programme. I would also urge you to make religious and cultural organizations partners in this mission, since they can influence tens of thousands of devoted people to launch a sustained voluntary action. I am happy to note that the Ministry of Environment is planning to start a major mass awareness campaign on the need to de-pollute our rivers and lakes.

Before concluding, I would like to urge all the participating States to fully share their responsibility in making this programme a success. The Central Government on its part will extend all possible assistance. It is distressing to note that some States have failed to fully use the funds made available by the Centre under this programme.

Friends, this meeting is taking place after a gap of nearly four years. We need to meet more frequently in the future. I am sure, with your cooperation, the meeting will conclude on a positive note and with a common resolve of conserving our precious water resources at any cost.

# A Wake-up Call to Cleanse the System

I HAVE TAKEN this opportunity to talk to you at a moment of intense controversy and much noise.

As you know, grave allegations have been made. Issues of great moment have arisen.

I have been in full view of all of you for fifty-two years. At no point have such allegations been made against my colleagues. That is by itself sufficient to make them of the gravest concern to me.

That they have erupted when after years of uncertainty, stability has been restored to the country; when we are implementing far-reaching reforms; when our economy has been growing rapidly in spite of what is happening elsewhere; when the world has once again come to look upon our country with respect makes me all the more concerned.

It makes me wonder too.

Parliament is in session. It is the forum in which these allegations should have been dissected. Unfortunately, Parliament has not been allowed to discuss them.

I am therefore here to talk directly to you—to you to whom Parliament and all of us are responsible.

The noise and dust of controversy, the din of allegations and explanations should not be allowed to obscure essential principles, and the interests of the country.

These are three:

- That the interests of our nation are paramount;
- That the security of our country must remain inviolate;

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Address to the nation, New Delhi, 16 March 2001

- That our Government, and beyond that our political system, must be cleansed, that it must function to the highest standards of propriety.

Each of these is of the highest concern to Government.

That is why the Government has acted decisively, and swiftly:

- Some officials have been suspended. Action against them is well under-way.
- In the highest traditions of the country, to safeguard the morale of our forces and the security of the country, my esteemed colleague, a stalwart of the NDA, Shri George Fernandes has left office.
- The two political leaders who figured in the videotapes have resigned their posts.

That all this is in sharp contrast to the way others similarly placed reacted in the past is incidental. The important point is that action has been taken immediately—because the interests of our country, because the security of our country, because the norms of good governance required that these steps be taken.

Even as we pursue every lead in the videotapes, we must be ever alert that the security of the country is not jeopardized in any manner.

We live in perilous times. We live in a perilous environment. For that reason, the morale and combat effectiveness of our valiant forces must not be allowed to suffer.

Decision–making in the Ministry of Defence must not become a shuttlecock tossed between allegations and explanations.

It is the duty of Government to uncover the complete truth about every single allegation that has been made. The Government is determined to do so. But there is a corresponding duty on each of us as citizens: focus on the facts, do not be

swept away by everything that is alleged. Throughout the hours of recordings, no deal is actually struck. No minister is involved. The boasts and allegations which the actors hurl are patently false, even the slightest effort would have revealed them to have been completely contrary to facts.

Hurling such allegations is criminal. Giving heed to them is just as destructive.

It isn't just that this way our security is undermined. Our economy too can be imperiled: if confidence is shaken, much—from stock markets to the Rupee—can be shaken. Many a country has been destabilized by such gales.

But as the allegations have been made, as they have been broadcast far and wide, they cause grave concern. The facts in regard to them must be nailed. If anyone has done wrong, he must be brought to book—swiftly and with the fullest force of law.

Parliament, as I said, is the forum that must discuss and dissect the issues and allegations—it must deliberate upon every ramification of every fact and allegation. From the very first moment the Government has been anxious that the two Houses discuss the matter. I appeal to all parties: allow Parliament to function, allow it to debate the issues threadbare.

But as such an important matter cannot be allowed to drift, as it cannot be allowed to become a football of political calculations, as facts need to be nailed, Government has decided to institute an inquiry by a sitting or retired judge of the Supreme Court. Government is consulting the Chief Justice of India in this regard.

As the controversy needs to be brought to a swift conclusion, we are requesting that the inquiry be completed within 4 months. Government will extend the fullest assistance in pursuing the inquiry.

The Government shall do everything necessary to bring

everyone guilty to account—howsoever high or low. It's only concerns are:

- That the country's security apparatus remains strong as ever;
- That our soldiers retain the fullest confidence in it;
- That institutions of governance and our political system regain their health;
- That our people's trust and faith in them are fortified.

In an important sense, what has come into view goes beyond security: the ease with which persons posing as arms merchants gained access to our defence personnel and politicians shows how far the cancer has spread. The revelations are therefore a wake-up call to all of us. Leaders of all parties should sit together and initiate reforms across the whole range of our political and administrative life—our electoral system, the system of funding political parties, the way cases against officials and those in public life are to be investigated and processed.

In a word, my countrymen, let us rise above our day-to-day preoccupations. Let us, by joining hands, convert this into an opportunity—to make the defence of our country even stronger, to cleanse our political life, to cleanse our administration.

I shall spare no effort in this regard. You have my word,

- That I shall do everything towards ensuring these wide-ranging reforms. I shall get to the bottom of the allegations which have been made;
- I shall work to clean up the dirt that has come into view;
- I will ensure that all this is done in such a way that the security of the country comes out stronger.

Let us begin the inquiry.

Let us have a thorough discussion in Parliament.

Let us get back to work.

# II

# Economic Development

# Strengthen India's Rural Economy

I AM DELIGHTED to be here with you this morning.

It is an opportunity to visit the Institute of Rural Management in Anand that has been rendering service to the nation by training young men and women in managing rural development. More importantly, it is a pleasure to meet young men and women like you who, through your work, can shape the destiny of our nation in the Twenty-first century.

Those of you who will be stepping out into the real world from the academic confines of this institute in search of careers and jobs have a unique opportunity: You are equipped with special knowledge and skills that can be used to change the face of rural India.

It calls for dedication. It calls for determination. Above all, it calls for faith in the abilities and centuries-old wisdom of the people who live in our villages. I have no doubt that you will not be found wanting in dedication, determination and faith.

That the Institute of Rural Management is located in Gujarat where Mahatma Gandhi was born, imparts certain significance to the task that lies ahead of you. The Mahatma had abiding faith in the abilities of rural India to break free of the shackles of poverty and show the way to prosperity through sustainable growth.

He believed in the revival of rural India's abilities and the strengthening of India's rural economy.

True independence and liberty, for the Mahatma, lay in

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Speech at the Convocation of the Institute of Rural Management, Anand (Gujarat), 12 April 2000

liberating India's village communities from poverty and exploitation. In *Hind Swaraj,* he says:

"We want to make our villages free and self-sufficient and through them achieve our goal—liberty... When I say I want independence for the millions, I mean to say not only that the millions may have something to eat and to cover themselves with, but that they will be free from the exploitation of people here and outside..."

As you step out of IRMA, I hope you will remember Mahatma Gandhi's words. I also hope you will treat your new jobs and careers as a mission to liberate rural India from the clutches of poverty and under-development. Your acquired skills and knowledge will then no doubt contribute to improving the lot of the people who live in India's villages—both socially and economically.

Our Government, since assumption of office in 1998, has endeavoured to fulfill the Mahatma's dream. We have taken certain steps for more effective implementation of rural development schemes.

To begin with, we have focused on enhancing the capacity of the rural poor through the establishment of self-help groups to act as facilitators of development.

Second, we have simplified our rural development mission, making it easily comprehensible to the masses. Bringing various schemes under the three broad categories of rural infrastructure, self-employment and wage-employment has done this.

And, finally, we have accorded higher priority than ever before to providing shelter to the rural homeless.

In addition, we have introduced greater flexibility in tackling rural poverty by providing unprecedented resources in helping rehabilitate those affected by natural disasters.

The importance of rural development in the overall development programme of India cannot be over-emphasized.

More than 70 per cent of India's population lives in her

600,000 villages. Two-thirds of the country's workforce is engaged in agriculture and allied activities, contributing 26 per cent of our gross domestic product. India is a predominantly agrarian economy and will remain so in the twenty-first century.

Therefore, the road to India's prosperity *has* to pass through her villages. If we look at the successful East Asian economies like those of Japan, Taiwan and South Korea, we will find that they first achieved sustained seven to eight per cent growth rates in their rural sector before becoming industrial and export giants.

Thus, no strategy of socio-economic development that bypasses the rural sector—its people, its natural resources, its problems and its potentials—can succeed. In fact, rural development lies at the core of India's overall progress.

Unfortunately, till recent years there has been inadequate appreciation of this fact. As a result, India's experience with rural development in the first five decades of Independence presents a study in contrasts, some of whose features are:

- For the first time in India's recorded history, famines have been eradicated. From a food deficit country, we have become food self-sufficient; yet, pockets of endemic hunger and malnutrition continue to stalk millions;
- India is the world's largest producer of milk, thanks primarily to the unique cooperative-based White Revolution; yet, per capita availability of milk for the poor is low;
- We are the world's second largest producer of fruits and vegetables; but only one per cent of this is processed, compared to 50 per cent in South America and 70 per cent in Israel.

No less stark is the comparison between India's impressive progress in agricultural production and the rather modest achievement in eradicating poverty and improving quality of life.

The percentage of people living below the poverty line

is still unacceptably high. As a result, average life expectancy and per capita income remain low, and so also does the Human Development Index.

Several structural and operational reforms, introduced as part of overall economic reforms in India, have had their impact on rural development and agriculture. At the international level, too, new rules governing trade have been introduced.

It is a collective challenge for all of us to set right the distortions in our development process and overcome the challenges of the new global economy. For you, it is an opportunity to employ your skills towards this end.

In this context, the immediate task that you need to set for yourselves is empowering the rural population:

- To overcome poverty, unemployment and illiteracy;
- To cope with the vulnerability of agriculture to vagaries of nature; and;
- To face the new situation in the market place.

I am confident that you and other rural managers will play an important role by spearheading the cause of *sustainable* rural development.

The changes in the national and international economic environment offer many opportunities. To seize these opportunities, we need to take a fresh look at our existing laws and regulations that have a direct bearing on rural development.

It is also necessary to organize rural producers, especially small and marginal farmers, in the wake of liberalization and globalization. This alone will strengthen and improve their bargaining power. Moreover, it will give them access to appropriate technology, institutional finance, national and international markets and professional management.

In this era of liberalization and globalization, we need to re-examine the role of genuine rural producers' cooperatives

and consider freeing our producers from unnecessary interference. Corporatization of cooperatives is one option that merits a close look.

That, however, is only one aspect of our rural economy. For overall sustainable rural development, we must adopt a fresh holistic approach and a new pragmatic programme.

My vision of a prosperous and proud India is based on a strong rural economy that offers employment opportunities, generates income, creates wealth for society as a whole and reverses the migration from villages to cities. At the same time, it respects the need to protect the balance of natural resources and environment.

To achieve this, we need to work rapidly in some key areas like:

- Developing critical rural infrastructure such as approach roads, godowns, cold storage capacity, post-harvest processing facilities;
- Creating local facilities for value addition to traditional rural products;
- Putting into place a sustainable rural development model based on community participation in the development and management of watersheds;
- Introducing regionally differentiated agricultural production strategies and environment friendly investments in technology; and
- Empowering rural communities through further devolution of powers to panchayats, involvement of marginal groups in the decision-making process and a completely decentralized methodology of resource mobilization and expenditure.

Yet another critical necessity for rapid rural development is the establishment of an effective and efficient delivery system for poverty eradication programmes.

Although there is no dearth of anti-poverty programmes sponsored by the Union and the State Governments, they often suffer from a fundamental flaw in their implementation. Financial target achievement is often perceived as the indicator of their success. Had this been true, then the enormous sums of money that have already been spent should have by now made a greater dent on poverty levels.

However, experience shows that this is not the case. On the contrary, poverty has remained at an unacceptable high level; in fact, in certain regions it has increased over the years.

Indeed, our experience shows that some schemes, due to poor implementation, have made the poor dependent on Government largesse, sapping them of all motivation and initiative. Worse, often leaving them weaker than before.

We have to, therefore, consider other options of effective poverty eradication.

Instead of making the poor solely dependent on Government largesse and thus making them captive to the caprices of ineffective delivery systems, we have made a beginning to empower them in a manner that will enable them to stand on their own feet and gain access to sustainable incomes.

As the Chinese say, it is wiser to teach a man how to fish rather than catch the fish for him. I need not emphasize the aptness of this proverb in our context.

Among the options for ensuring sustainable income for the rural poor is the Anand model of rural development as it has evolved over the last five decades.

This model has effectively ensured market intervention in favour of small agricultural producers, provided them with all critical inputs and infused a sense of self-confidence in the poor and other vulnerable sections of rural society. It is a pragmatic approach to promoting sustainable and equitable rural development.

Variants of this model have been replicated elsewhere with success. With the help of professional rural managers like those of you who are graduating today, the pace of rural development can be accelerated by further replication of the Anand model.

I have no doubt in my mind that you are fully equipped to help harness the tremendous capacities of our villages and convert rural India into the foundation on which a prosperous national economy can be built.

I congratulate you for successfully graduating from IRMA and wish you a productive future as managers of rural development.

# Need for Greater Stress on Export Promotion

I AM HAPPY to be at this function to felicitate top achievers in exports from India.

You have succeeded in the face of stiff global competition and made full use of Government's various policy initiatives to facilitate exports. Your success is both a contribution to the national economy as well as an inspiration for other exporters.

Above all, your success is an example of *excellence* that will be the hallmark of successful societies in the twenty-first century.

Pursuing ever-higher levels of export is by no means an easy job, especially when the fast changing needs of the global markets are difficult to predict and fulfil. It requires great

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Speech while presenting National Export Awards, New Delhi, 8 May 2000

ability to meet the unrelenting standards of overseas buyers in order to remain globally competitive.

The successful exporter, therefore, is an achiever whose abilities are put to test regularly and rigorously. The National Export Awards are recognition of your achievement.

There is no gainsaying the fact that we need to lay greater stress on export promotion. Last time when I addressed you, I had emphasized that sustained and high export growth should be viewed as a national goal.

To achieve this goal, we need to reorient our thinking and approach to international trade in the era of globalization. Despite the apparent challenges posed by the changed terms of tariff and trade, globalization offers numerous opportunities that are advantageous to developing nations.

Indeed, many developing countries have used the opportunities offered by a global economy to achieve dramatic export-led economic growth, leading to overall prosperity, and higher per capita income through generation of employment opportunities.

Thus, nations, societies and individuals have gained by aggressively participating in the global economy and seeking a higher share of the global market by successfully competing with others. This has been the experience of many developing countries, especially in East and South-East Asia. They have shown that exports can be a powerful engine of economic growth and employment generation.

To meet the challenges and seize the opportunities of globalization we have to keep pace with the basic impulse of globalization: Rapid change in technology, especially communications technology. Increasing global connectivity has led to the shrinking of space, time and economic boundaries.

While integrating economies, globalization also makes nations interdependent, especially through trade. And, that is why India, along with other developing countries, maintains that if globalization is about interdependence through trade,

developed nations must provide genuine market access to developing nations.

The sector in India that best exemplifies using globalization to our national advantage, is information technology. Our IT professionals have earned global attention and respect. The information technology sector also demonstrates that purposeful synergy between Government policy and private initiative can achieve real progress.

We now need to replicate this approach for other sectors of our economy, especially knowledge-based sectors like pharmaceuticals, electronics and biotechnology. There are many opportunities for India in these fields and Government will not fail to bring about changes that are required to achieve success and global standards in these sectors.

We have to also ensure that growth in exports is not limited to big industry. Our small-scale sector can play an important role in pushing up India's export levels and to achieve this, Government has taken some measures. Further necessary steps shall be taken.

For, we believe that exports play a more fundamental role in the national economic process than merely fetching hard currency to pay for India's essential imports and to meet international obligations. This is in sharp contrast to the earlier perception of exports as merely a means of earning foreign exchange.

Indeed, exports help in many other ways in the overall development process—for instance, by helping assimilate changes in technology, management systems and international best practices in terms of product quality, packaging and marketing.

Therefore, export expansion is now a fundamental requirement in the context of our development objectives.

Viewed from this perspective, our export performance acquires added significance. The growing share of manufactured exports and services exports gives us the confidence that in the global marketplace, India is neither weak nor at a disadvantage.

You have amply demonstrated what India can achieve in the competitive world markets.

I am glad to see exports returning to double-digit growth in 1999-2000 after a period of decline due to a variety of global factors. We must now aim at achieving at least 20 per cent sustained growth in exports. We depend upon you for helping us achieve this task.

I extend my congratulations to the award winners for 1998-99, which was a difficult year for exports. I also congratulate all exporters for their effort to further this national cause.

# Harness Rain Water for Sustainable Development

I AM HAPPY to be amidst all of you at this important seminar. It is being held not a day too soon.

The attention of the entire country is today focussed on the drought in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and some other parts of the country. A concerted effort has been mounted by the Centre and the State governments to alleviate the suffering of the people and the cattle in drought-hit areas. And as always happens in times of such natural calamities, people and non-governmental organizations from all parts of the country have generously contributed to this effort.

As a result, relief has by and large reached the needy. I take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the exemplary response to our appeal to donate to the Prime Minister's Drought Relief Fund.

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Speech while inaugurating the Seminar on Rain Water Harvesting, New Delhi, 22 May 2000

One of the real gains of the challenge posed by the drought, however, is that the country is today talking not only about the problem but also about solutions to it. Solutions that are practical, appropriate and durable. In particular, I see widespread interest everywhere in rainwater harvesting and other water conservation ideas. Today's national seminar, I am confident, will go a long way in converting these ideas into effective action—and the present crisis into an opportunity.

Water is the source of life. It is also the sustainer of life. There is plenty of water on planet earth to meet the needs of human beings, animals and all other kinds of life. But if we human beings do not conserve and use this precious resource properly, we not only deprive large sections of human population of their basic minimum requirement of water, but we endanger the very natural life cycle on the planet.

It is estimated that water in the 21st century is going to be as precious a resource as oil in the 20th century. Today, one billion people in the world—that is, one sixth of humanity—have inadequate access to clean drinking water. Unless governments and communities begin to effectively tackle this problem, the number of people without clean and sufficient water will rise to 2.5 billion in the next 25 years—that is, nearly one person in three.

It is disquieting to know that most of these water-deprived people are, and will likely be, in our country. Lack of clean and adequate water means ill-health, disease, drudgery and discontent. It means under-development of the economy and society. In situations of acute, prolonged and recurring water shortage, it also means social unrest.

Therefore, this is a problem that is getting more acute, serious and multi-dimensional with the passage of time. We simply cannot afford not to get our act together as a nation. The responsibility of responding to the challenge does not rest with the Government alone—be it the Centre or the State governments. The situation calls for nothing short of a nationwide people's movement, with the active participation

of the governments, the Panchyati Raj institutions, NGOs, businesses, housing cooperatives and, last but not the least, each and every citizen.

No single initiative is adequate to solve the problem of drinking water. We necessarily have to follow diverse routes and a plurality of programmes to achieve our objective. But, amongst all of them, the one idea that stands out for its simplicity, efficacy and affordability is rain water harvesting. Capture rain water, store it and use it—it is as simple as that. If appropriate technologies are built around this simple idea, they can provide decentralized, local-level solutions that can considerably meet the drinking water needs of our urban and rural populations.

Our failure to capture rain water and to prevent it from flowing away has created an ironical situation. Even areas that are known to receive a very high rainfall—such as Cherrapunji and Konkan—face severe shortage of water for nearly half the year. It is not going to be possible to provide piped water, carried from a large and distant source, to all the habitations in the country. Even cities and towns with piped water supply are increasingly facing water shortage. In all such cases, the imperative of rain water harvesting is too obvious to ignore.

Failure to harvest rain water has also led to excessive and indiscriminate exploitation of ground water. As a consequence, ground water table in many parts of the country has gone down alarmingly. Apart from making our schemes for drinking and irrigation water far costlier than before, this is also causing serious health and social problems. We need to devise an effective policy for scientific and equitable harnessing of ground water. I would invite a nationwide debate on this issue to guide the governments and local self-government institutions to evolve proper policies and practices.

Friends, in the ultimate analysis, effective solutions do not lie exclusively in good policies. What is of paramount importance is people's attitude and habits. If we continue to treat, as we've been doing, water as a free or cheap resource

that can be wasted, not even the best policies and technologies can help. As in the past, we need to regain the sense of the sacred in the way we relate to water and to our rich water resources.

Before I conclude, I am reminded here of the story of "Meghdoot" by Kalidasa. In this celebrated play, clouds become the messenger carrying a message from a cursed *Yaksha*, who has been sent off to *Bhooloka*, to his *Yakshini*. Now, too, clouds become the messenger at the beginning of each monsoon. The difference is that the clouds now carry their own message to the cursed *Bhooloka*. They seem to tell all of us: "We are bringing this precious *Amrit* called water from the heavens. And we are bringing it for you in plenty. Our message to you is to conserve it and store it till we come again next year. If you waste it, you will invite the curse of scarcity upon yourselves."

Let us all heed the *Meghdootam* of rain-water harvesting and ensure clean and adequate drinking water to every citizen of this country.

With these remarks, I inaugurate this important seminar and wish its organizers and participants all success.

# Committed to All-round Progress

IT GIVES ME great pleasure to be here with you today on the auspicious occasion of laying of the foundation-stone for the Kol Dam Hydroelectric Project. This is yet another milestone in Himachal's path to economic and social progress.

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Speech while laying the foundation-stone of Kol Hydel Power Project, Himachal Pradesh, 5 June 2000

The Kol Project, when completed, will produce 800 MW of power. Not only will this mean additional power for the people of Himachal Pradesh, but it will also be a major contribution towards meeting our nation's electricity needs in the coming decades.

India has the potential and the resources—both manpower and natural wealth—to make her mark as a developed country and an economic powerhouse. We are determined to tap this potential and use these resources so that the twenty-first century sees the emergence of a new India—a nation whose people are prosperous; a country that is self-sufficient; and, a society that is not afflicted by widespread poverty.

There is only one road that can lead us to this goal.

And, that road is rapid economic growth coupled with fast social development. One of the crucial requirements for the rapid economic growth is adequate generation of electricity.

For a variety of reasons, including rules and regulations of the past that restricted growth rather than encouraging it, there is a gap between our electricity need and production. We have already done away with most of these restrictive rules and regulations so that there is greater attraction for investors and easier facilitation of approval. At the same time, we have ensured that the cost of electricity remains affordable for the consumer.

We have firmly placed electricity generation high on our agenda.

Friends, whenever I have spoken of development, I have also mentioned the need to ensure that our projects and programmes, especially those linked to infrastructure creation, should have a visible impact on the quality of lives of the people—in the immediate vicinity of these projects as well as in the country as a whole. For, if individuals prosper, the nation prospers.

The Kol Dam Project will no doubt unleash prosperity in fields, in small-scale units and generate employment

opportunities. Along with other such projects, the Kol Project, too, shall bring prosperity in Himachal Pradesh. This, in turn, shall contribute to the prosperity of our country.

But prosperity should not come at the terrible cost of destroying our environment and disturbing our ecological balance.

We do not aim at mere development, but at sustainable development.

Friends, today is World Environment Day. It is an occasion for us to take stock of how far we have been able to preserve that which we have inherited as well as pledge ourselves to protecting our environment through careful planning and controlled consumption. Nature has been bountiful to Himachal Pradesh—your rivers, your mountains, your forests, your lush fields and your fruit-bearing orchards are nature's gifts. These are life-sustaining resources; draw upon them, but do not exploit them.

Your beautiful State, to which I am drawn again and again, has a number of snow-fed perennial rivers. There are natural water reservoirs. This abundance of water invests Himachal Pradesh with immense potential for hydroelectric power generation. Indeed, more than a quarter of India's hydroelectric potential lies in your State.

By tapping this potential, which is estimated to be more than 21,000 megawatts over a period of time and without violating the ecological balance of Himachal Pradesh, the State can become one of the most prosperous and developed States in the country.

Bearing this in mind, we have designed the Kol Dam Project. Not only shall this project produce 800 megawatts of hydroelectric power, it will do so without disturbing the State's ecological balance and without causing any long-term damage to environment.

For, hydroelectricity offers several advantages:

- Cheap and clean power;
- Easy to meet peaking power deficit;
- Renewable source of power;
- Environment friendly;
- Development of remote areas; and,
- Economic uplift and general prosperity.

I congratulate NTPC, which will be executing the Kol Dam Project, for diversifying into hydroelectricity and non-conventional energy development. This diversification follows our Government's new Hydro Power Development Policy that aims at generating an additional 9,817 MW of power from various hydroelectricity projects during the Ninth Plan (1997-2002). This policy has significantly simplified techno-economic clearance procedures. Above all, it promotes "Clean and Green Power".

On World Environment Day, the Kol Dam Project is our gift to the people as well as our message to the world—India is committed to sustainable development.

I congratulate Himachal Pradesh Government for its perspective plan to generate an additional fifteen thousand megawatts of hydro power over the next twenty years. It has shown exemplary initiative in pursuing projects and getting them off the ground.

One of the issues that Governments have to reckon with while executing development projects is that of acquisition of land. I understand that there were some problems regarding acquisition of land for the Kol Dam Project. I am happy that these have been resolved amicably to everybody's satisfaction.

With the majority of the people of this State being dependent on agriculture and related activities for their livelihood, this boost in "clean and green" power generation will come as a boon for them. From the Kol Project alone, Himachal Pradesh will get twelve per cent of the power

produced free of cost and another fifteen per cent at reduced rates.

But generating power is not enough if the bulk of it cannot be used for the development of Himachal Pradesh. The Government headed by Shri Dhumal has already achieved the essential requirements for rapid progress—political stability and financial discipline. You now need to think in terms of setting up units that will derive advantages from factors specific to Himachal Pradesh. With a high literacy rate and laudable social indicators, there is no reason why Himachal cannot embark upon setting up food-processing and electronics units.

I assure you that the Union government will not hesitate to provide all necessary help for the rapid socio-economic development of Himachal Pradesh. We have already provided more than Rs. 300 crore as assistance for special projects. Funds, if meant for long-term and lasting prosperity of the people, will never be a problem.

# A National Approach to Economic Policies

I AM PLEASED to welcome you to this second meeting of the reconstituted Economic Advisory Council. We are meeting at a time when there are many positive features in the economy and given a favourable monsoon, we should grow at well over 7 per cent during the current year. The creeping upward inflationary pressures have also been somewhat arrested. Agriculture is expected to do well. I do believe that the momentum in the industrial sector represents a sustained revival.

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Speech at the second meeting of the reconstituted Economic Advisory Council, New Delhi, 17 July 2000

We have continued policy initiatives in several areas particularly, infrastructure. I expect that given some of the new changes in the Telecom sector, we should in the coming months witness a significant increase in inward flows in this sector and several financial closures can be quickly achieved. The Committee under the Finance Minister has made some important recommendations and this along with the proposed new legislation for a Telecom Bill—2000 based on the principles of convergence would give an added boost to this sector.

I have also been assured that the ambitious Road programme is on track and one thousand kilometres would be completed this year while contracts for another three thousand kilometres will be finalized and awarded before the end of this year. The High Density Corridors, which have been identified, should attract private investment. The Ministry of Surface Transport has been asked to accelerate their Port corporatisation programme.

I hope that the programme for giving several airports on long-term lease can make faster progress. The present procedures need to be streamlined. We also need to ensure that there are no slippages in the disinvestment programmes for Indian Airlines and Air India which should provide a credible framework for a forward looking Civil Aviation policy.

The power sector continues to be dogged by nagging issues and I would like to see a clearer road map on Power reforms. Implementation of approved projects continues to be a problem in this sector. Financial closures of many long delayed projects and removing hurdles for enabling quicker implementation needs closer attention.

I also believe that a more proactive approach to sort out project specific constraints will enhance investment flows and improve realization ratio from the large volume and value of approved proposals for Foreign Direct Investment.

Fiscal consolidation however remains a major issue. Tax reforms have made progress but much more needs to be done

for improving the tax administration, tax widening and administrative simplification. On indirect taxes, I hope the time-frame for introduction of a VAT, which has been agreed upon, will be adhered to. I am looking forward to the various reports of the Expenditure Commission and I hope that some of the difficult issues relating to subsidies, user-charges, rationalizing the expenditure portfolio and the manpower connected with it can be addressed in the coming months.

I must also stress that the problems concerning the social sector particularly, Drinking Water, Primary health, Education and Rural connectivity must receive the high priority they deserve.

On the whole one can say with some satisfaction that given the stable macro-fundamental and a credible programme for sectoral reforms, the economic outlook continues to be optimistic. The initiatives in the area of Information Technology, Knowledge-based Industry, the growth of our software industry, the pressure to increase the number of professionals from our specialized institutions who are in demand in many countries has imparted a new dynamism to our economy. It has also caught the imagination of the rest of the world.

We also generally know some of the important issues which require immediate attention. The problem is one of sustaining a genuine national consensus. And of achieving a truly bi-partisan support. I have said on more occasion than one that the economic agenda which is in India's long-term interest can and must be depoliticized. Clearly, we need to identify the priorities and commonalities.

It would be useful if in today's meeting, you can briefly comment on what you perceive to be the real priorities. And whether they are in fact doable given our political framework in the sort of time frame we have in mind. At the end of today's meeting, I would request one of you to put together a Common Approach Paper which briefly deals these issues. This could form the basis for a wider national debate in our effort to forge a national consensus. This would constitute an

important contribution which this Council can make in the formulation of a national approach to economic policies.

There is one more area on which I wish to briefly solicit your comments. There is a perception that the present reform strategy is elitist-driven. And that it is designed to help industry and the corporate sector without its benefits trickling down to the poorer sections of the society and leaving the rural economy untouched. The fact that in the long run a strategy which leads to high rates of economic growth has overall benefits is alone not adequate to alter this perception. We need to devise a more credible Communication Strategy and to bring out clearly that the changes being brought about will benefit the average man whether by way of improved rural connectivity at lower tariffs, assured supply of water, better roads and improved infrastructure. A concerted approach in this area needs to be evolved if we are to sustain the momentum for economic changes which indeed we must, if India is to achieve the rates of growth necessary to eliminate poverty.

These are two broad areas on which at today's meeting your comments would be useful in shaping our decisions and public perceptions.

# Steady Growth in Small-scale Sector

IT GIVES ME great pleasure to be here with you today. Two years ago, Laghu Udyog Bharati had invited me to their conference in this very hall. Several measures were then suggested for strengthening the Small-scale Sector.

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Speech while inaugurating the conference on Small-scale Industries, New Delhi, 30 August 2000

In these two years, various initiatives have been taken to address your concerns and strengthen the Small-scale Industries sector. These include the decision to lower investment limit to Rs. 1 crore from Rs. 3 crore and the setting up of a separate Ministry for Small-scale Industries.

I am happy to note that the Small-scale Sector has responded to our initiatives by improving their performance. The growth rate registered by you is higher than that of the overall industrial sector.

No less important is that fact that the Small-scale sector has registered steady growth in employment generation. Indeed, this sector continues to lead the way in generation of employment opportunities.

As you are aware, a Group of Ministers, headed by Shri L. K. Advani, was constituted by the Cabinet to recommend measures to strengthen Small-scale industries.

I am glad to inform you that based on the recommendations of the Group of Ministers, Government has decided to implement a set of measures, which will substantially strengthen the Small-scale sector. These include:

- The Small-scale sector has suffered due to inadequate access to credit availability. We have, therefore, decided to raise the limit for composite loans from Rs. 10 lakhs to Rs. 25 lakhs. Entrepreneurs will now be able to secure term loans and working capital from the same agency.
- Industry related service and business enterprises with a maximum investment of Rs. 10 lakhs will qualify for priority lending. These services are essential for the proper functioning of the Small-scale sector. These services also provide employment in rural and semi-urban areas.
- Bearing in mind the urgent need for technology upgradation, Government is happy to announce a capital subsidy of 12 per cent for investment in technology in select sectors. We will set up an inter-ministerial committee of experts

to define the scope of technology upgradation and sectoral priorities.

- Government is alive to the grievance that frequent inspections by multiple agencies are a source of harassment to the Small-scale sector. We will set up a Group to recommend, within three months, means of streamlining inspections. These would include repeal of laws and regulations applicable to the sector that have since become redundant. I would urge you to submit your suggestions in this regard to the Ministry of Small scale Industries.

- The last census of Small-scale industries was conducted 12 years ago. For effective policy-making and implementation, we need to update our data. Therefore, we have decided to go in for a fresh census that will cover, inter-alia, the incidence of sickness and its causes. I request industry associations to cooperate with the census authorities so that a true picture emerges.

I am happy to note that more and more Small-scale units are opting for ISO 9000 certification. To encourage total quality management, we have decided to continue, for the next six years, granting Rs. 75,000 to each unit that obtains ISO 9000 certification.

We have also decided to give one time capital grant of fifty per cent to Small-scale associations who wish to develop and operate testing laboratories, provided they are of international standard.

The SSI sector already enjoys some special fiscal incentives. However, for quite some time, this sector has been requesting for an increase in the limit for exemption from excise duty to improve its competitiveness and to help the units facing sickness.

I am happy to announce that in response to your requests, we are increasing the exemption limit from Rs. 50 lakhs to Rs. 1 crore.

This will be the second increase made by our Government, the first one having been in 1998 when the limit of Rs. 30 lakhs was increased to Rs. 50 lakhs. There are certain other requests relating to customs duties. The Finance Minister will be announcing suitable measures in due course.

Development of Khadi and Village Industries is a critical component of the strategy to achieve a balanced and integrated development. This segment is an important link not only to the informal economy, but it fosters skills, promotes entrepreneurship at a micro level and is integral to our growth process.

Khadi is environment friendly. It provides jobs to millions of people. With upgradation of skills and quality of Khadi products, it can be marketed globally. We are committed to further strengthening the viability of this sector.

A rebate on sale of Khadi products has been continued. Beyond this, we are working out a new comprehensive package to strengthen Khadi and Village Industries that will further upgrade the skills of the Khadi workers. These will cover:

- Provision for 20 per cent of projected annual turnover to be given as working capital loan;
- Continuation of concessional lending facilities; and,
- Preference for loans for technology upgradation.

I am happy to announce that yesterday, government has approved a Deendayal Hathkargha Protsahan Yojana. This is a scheme aimed at supporting the handloom sector through finance, design and marketing inputs.

The scheme to be implemented by the Centre and States, has a total financial implication of Rs. 447 crores. This scheme provides comprehensive financial and infrastructural support to weavers and handloom organizations will substantially strengthen this sector.

The global environment is changing rapidly. The Small-scale Sector has an important contribution to make in enhancing

the competitive strength of our industry, provide an avenue for new employment and harness the entrepreneurial skills available in abundance in this country.

I have broadly touched on some of the measures to strengthen the Small and Medium Industries. The Ministry of Small and Medium Industries will be separately announcing some other measures to further strengthen this sector.

You must accept the challenge of globalization and improve your product quality to effectively deal with the forces of competition. We will support your endeavours to meet this challenge on a sustainable basis.

I congratulate today's prizewinners for their outstanding achievements. Small entrepreneurs, rural artisans and cottage industry have done the country proud in the last fifty years. They form the pillars of our national economy.

Let us together strengthen this pillar so that our national economy can take off for newer heights.

# Need for Fundamental Restructuring of Policies

I AM HAPPY to chair this first meeting of the Planning Commission of the present Government. The agenda and the papers circulated for this meeting sets the tone for our discussions.

The mid-term review of the Ninth Plan provides a balanced assessment of the state of the economy. It presents our achievements which are considerable. It also points to areas

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Speech at the meeting of the Planning Commission, New Delhi, 30 September 2000

of weakness and highlights some of the critical problems which we must face in the years ahead.

It should be a matter of legitimate satisfaction that India's economic growth has been a sustained one despite several shocks in recent years. Despite these shocks, our rate of growth in the 1990s makes us one of the ten fastest growing economies in the world. The macro fundamentals of our economy is reasonably strong. There are, no doubt, pressures particularly on the fiscal side.

There are also new worries created by the steep rise in oil prices. The situation arising out of the oil prices needs to be kept under constant review. It is, however, a matter of satisfaction that poverty has declined during this period, though not as much as we would want.

And yet, the challenges we face are very considerable. The growth and poverty reduction we have achieved is commendable but it is not enough. The aspirations of our people, especially the new entrants into the labour force, require us to move much faster.

*Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the meeting of the Planning Commission, New Delhi, 30 September 2000*

It is necessary to build a society which provides more opportunities for growth and development for all sections of our people. And this must be done in a world in which globalization is a reality forcing us to face the challenge of competing with other countries.

We live in a world in which technology is a major driving force for development. No society can progress if it cannot keep pace with technological development round the world. These developments hold the key to solving many of our problems. They range from food security and agricultural modernization to health care, environmental protection, penetration of export markets.

India is uniquely placed in having the capacity to absorb modern technology and indeed even contribute to its development. At the same time, almost forty per cent of our population is still illiterate and the percentage is much higher for women and girls. We must give top priority to improving our performance in this sector.

Massive investments are needed to develop an economic infrastructure capable of supporting rapid growth. India's infrastructure whether we talk of power or roads or railways or telecommunications, needs major transformation to come up to the standards even applicable to developing countries.

The mid-term review prepared by the Commission draws attention to these problems. It frankly examines the weaknesses in our existing programmes and indicates the directions in which policies must be changed in future. The time left for the Ninth Plan is only 1 ½ years. We must renew our efforts in this period to assess the corrective steps necessary to achieve the Ninth Plan targets.

More importantly, we must also reflect on the issues posed by this document to undertake a more fundamental restructuring of our policies. This is necessary for making

faster progress in the Tenth Plan period, which is now just round the corner.

I would like the Commission to examine the feasibility of raising our growth target from 6.5 per cent in the Ninth Plan to 9 per cent in the Tenth Plan. Even this, in my view, is less than the expectations that have been raised in our society. As a start, however, we should define the minimum necessary set of policies to achieve a 9 per cent growth in the Tenth Plan.

This is only possible if we can take a number of difficult steps with far reaching changes in existing policies. It is time that these issues are frontally addressed and both the Centre and the States are faced with a clean statement of what needs to be done in their respective areas.

In this context, the proposals to restructure the Planning Commission which are before us are particularly important. The role of planning is obviously very different from what it was in the earlier years.

In the economic sphere the role of the private sector has increased enormously and much of the prospects for achieving higher growth depend upon private sector initiatives in both industry and agriculture, working within the framework of a competitive market economy. However, this does not mean that planning has no relevance in this context.

The shift from a control economy which emphasized the public sector does not mean that Government can give up its responsibility for ensuring balanced development. The role of Government remains extremely important but somewhat different. It must ensure that the environment is such that the private sector can perform its requisite role.

The role of the Government in a market based economy becomes increasingly one of a facilitator. It is that of a regulator, a provider of basic, social and economic infrastructure and the driving force behind poverty alleviation.

Planning has to move beyond undertaking mere budgetary allocations towards ensuring policy harmonization with a view to creating a productive environment. I would expect that in the course of this move from largely investment planning orientation, the Commission would create within itself the capacity to undertake independent assessment of issues and policy options.

Planning Commission, in today's context must also act as a "Think Tank" for the Government.

I compliment the Deputy Chairman, Members and the officers of the Planning Commission on having recognized the need to undertake institutional corrections.

These changes, can become meaningful only if they are matched by the willingness of the other arms of Government to seek and abide by the advice of the Planning Commission.

# Form Partnership in Petro-Chemical Industries

IT IS A pleasure to be with you at the inaugural function of this international exhibition on chemicals, petrochemicals and pharmaceuticals.

Together, these sectors form an important part of our national economy. They produce several items of mass consumption, ranging from medicines to chemicals.

No less important is the fact that these sectors contribute substantially to our industrial production and account for almost ten per cent of exports. Government, therefore, regards

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Speech while inaugurating "India Chem 2000", International Exhibition, New Delhi, 5 October 2000

these sectors as important thrust areas in the growth of the country's economy.

The Indian chemical industry has witnessed unprecedented growth over the last two decades. Quality has kept with pace and quantity. Indian chemical products today compete with the best in world markets.

Indeed, it is a matter of satisfaction that our chemical products are being exported to many developed countries. This is a tribute to producers who have excelled in product and process development.

It is only appropriate that India should showcase its strength and capability in these sectors. This exhibition provides the opportunity to do so.

With its vast pool of talented and skilled professionals, India aspires to emerge as one of the leaders in knowledge-based industries like petrochemicals and pharmaceuticals, as well as an international R&D hub.

*Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee speaking at the inauguration of India Chem-2000 International Exhibition, New Delhi, 5 October 2000*

This international exhibition and conference offers an opportunity to form strategic partnerships, thus contributing to realizing our twin aspirations. Such partnerships will also promote India's cooperation with other countries at a time when the world economy is getting rapidly integrated.

By all indications, the petrochemicals industry in India will witness rapid growth in the coming years. This is borne out by the facts that per capita consumption of plastic and synthetic fibres in our country is increasing by around fifteen per cent every year; and, India can put up world-class plants in record time.

Together, they make this sector an attractive destination for foreign direct investment and joint ventures.

Similarly, the Indian pharmaceutical industry has tremendous potential. Improving standard of living, combined with increasing purchasing power, is leading to a rapid rise in the demand for pharmaceutical products.

Besides, India offers world-class production and laboratory facilities. The cost of new drug development in India is around a tenth of that in developed countries. Therefore, this sector, too, is a prime destination for Foreign Direct Investment, both in production and research.

Friends, the successful mapping of the human genome has opened the doors to new opportunities. To seize these opportunities, we have to integrate our strength in the information technology sector with research and development in the pharmaceutical sector.

If we are able to synergize our strengths and skills successfully, India can emerge as a major player in digital medicine. Let us be in the forefront of the transition we are witnessing.

Government will do everything to make that possible. We have set up a 1.5 billion rupee fund for promoting research

in pharmaceuticals. This is only a beginning, but it indicates the importance we attach to research and development.

I have set up task forces on infrastructure, knowledge-based industries, finance and other sectors to suggest ways to promote rapid growth. The reports of these task forces will be used to bring about necessary changes in policy and introduce further reforms to unshackle the genius of our people.

Friends, it is a matter of satisfaction that the USA, global leader in the chemical industry, is a partner in this endeavour of the Government of India and FICCI. This, and the participation of US companies in this show, is an example of Indo-US cooperation in the new century.

Gujarat, the partner-State for this event, has the largest concentration of chemical, petrochemical and pharmaceutical units. This State has done laudable work in providing infrastructure for the chemical industry, especially in environment management and pollution control.

Similarly, it is only appropriate that New Jersey should be the partner-State in India Chem 2000 from the American side. New Jersey is home to a large number of chemical and pharmaceutical companies. I look forward to many of them striking a long–term working relationship with Indian companies.

I compliment the large number of Indian and foreign companies for deciding to participate in India Chem 2000. I am sure the participants and visitors to this exhibition will find the event useful and rewarding.

With these words, I inaugurate India Chem 2000.

# Towards Equitable Energy Sources

IT GIVES ME great pleasure to be present at this distinguished gathering of energy sector specialists and policy-makers.

Many of you have travelled from various parts of the world to participate in this session of the Executive Assembly of the World Energy Council. As an emerging economic powerhouse, India is happy to host the first session of the Executive Assembly in the next century.

The world is becoming increasingly technology-driven. In its quest for conquering new frontiers of scientific knowledge, humankind is adopting tools that are technology-centric. In all this, energy is a key determinant.

Indeed, energy today plays a key role in deciding levels of development: Per capita consumption of energy is now seen as a measure of economic growth and social progress of individuals, societies and nations.

For equitable development of nations across the world, it is essential that access to and availability of energy sources should be guaranteed to all. However, with nearly half the world's people surviving on less than two dollars a day and a third on less than one dollar a day, access to and availability of energy sources continue to elude many a developing nation.

The situation is compounded by the fact that majority of the rural population in developing nations is still dependent on traditional fuels. This at best meets basic human requirements, but does not improve the quality of the lives of the poor and marginalized.

Therefore, to ensure equitable development within and

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Speech at the Executive Assembly of the World Energy Council, New Delhi, 22 November 2000

among nations, we have to work towards equitable and sustainable access to and availability of energy sources.

In the era of globalization, attaining this should not be impossible. Indeed, globalization offers immense possibilities of developed and developing nations working together in the energy sector to their mutual advantage.

Developed countries have access to technology, financial resources and expertise; developing countries offer an expanding market for energy sources. In this scenario, the World Energy Council can play an important role in encouraging partnership between developing and developed countries.

Economic liberalization and globalization have led to increasing demand for energy—to run industry, to create infrastructure and to meet rising domestic requirements. This has further strengthened the case for partnership in the energy sector.

We are confident that our initiatives will lead to greater participation and wider partnership in developing India's energy sector.

Friends, for adequate and equitable and sustainable energy development, we must focus on the agreed principles of collective endeavour as laid down in The Rio Declaration on Environment & Development, 1992. The first principle of the Declaration states, "Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development."

It is this concern that should lie at the core of business—global, national or corporate.

Seen in this context, the World Energy Council, at its 17th World Congress in Houston two years ago, was right in concluding that the number one priority for development of sustainable energy for all was to extend access to commercial energy services to the two billion people who do not have it now. And, to the almost two billion people who, it is estimated, will come into this world in the next two decades.

Success in meeting the energy requirements of these four billion people over the next two decades should be regarded as the first test of the sustainability of our collective global energy development efforts. This is an opportunity and a challenge—for developed and developing nations—to establish an environmentally sustainable system for the twenty-first century.

The "Rio Declaration" further says that "All states and all people shall cooperate in the essential task of eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in order to decrease the disparities in standards of living and better meet the needs of the majority of the people of the world. The special situation and needs of developing countries, particularly the least developed and those most environmentally vulnerable, shall be given special priority."

Any development agenda, whether global, national or corporate, therefore, should be framed bearing in mind these principles that form, what can be described as, the 'global ethics' of development.

Friends, People-centered energy goals should be fundamental to energy business in the twenty-first century. This will call for comprehensive national, regional and global policy initiatives to encourage reforms, augment infrastructure, upgrade technologies and introduce new technologies. Above all, to balance environment as well as development concerns of different economies in harmony with their unique economic and social requirements.

Energy concerns across the world are marked by a certain amount of variance in priorities. Developed nations are seized with environmental implications of energy concerns. On the other hand, developing nations are focused on ensuring that their people have access to basic minimum tool for securing their livelihood, including access to energy supply.

The role of a global agency like the World Energy Council

lies in promoting convergence and integration of the priorities of developing and developed countries.

I am sure that the World Energy Council will play a constructive role in shaping the energy sector of developing nations so that they have greater and equitable access to energy sources and, thereby, help ensure equitable development.

With these words, I inaugurate this session of the Executive Assembly of the World Energy Council.

# Maximize the Benefits of Economic Liberalization

THE INDIA ECONOMIC Summit, organized by the World Economic Forum and the Confederation of Indian Industry, has contributed to improved understanding of our national development process and economic policies. It has also enabled foreign investors to appreciate the potential of business opportunities in India.

The fifteen economic summits held so far have served a useful purpose in improving Government-business communications and creating networks of relationships. More than anything else, such relationships lead to mutual understanding and promotion of trade and investment.

I am speaking to you today for the third consecutive year. During this short period, you would have perceived my Government's determination to pursue policies that will make India globally competitive and, progressively integrate India with the global community.

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Speech at the India Economic Summit, New Delhi, 26 November 2000

My Cabinet colleagues will be speaking to you during this summit. They will outline our sectoral policies and programmes.

I will confine myself to making some observations on the direction in which we are moving. It would also be in order to make some comments about global integration in the light of recent experiences.

Friends, the inevitability of globalization is recognized by all.

However, during the last one year misgivings about the globalization process have become more and more pronounced. This is evident from the increasingly vigorous protests in Seattle, Prague, Bangkok, Melbourne and even Davos:

Are these protestors a group of misplaced individuals? And what are they protesting against?

Some of the placard-wavers have cynically commented that they are against everything. But, a serious analysis of the protests will show that we cannot ignore the fact that there are many misgivings cutting across nations; that there are apprehensions, which are shared across borders.

If it is so self-evident that globalization leads to increased opportunities, enhanced growth and real income, why are these not being universally accepted? Is it a communication failure? Is it merely an image problem? Is it that Governments are unable to ensure that the fruits of development percolate to the grassroots'? Or, is it that globalization is increasingly being perceived to be elite-driven, conferring benefits on large corporates while bypassing millions of poor and marginalized people? In India alone the number of such people is nearly 300 million.

We need to ponder over these questions and come up with acceptable, convincing responses.

The effectiveness of these responses would partially lie in accepting that while globalization affords unbounded

opportunities, these opportunities go hand in hand with obligations. The privilege of being a global player must be matched with the responsibility of making the process universally acceptable by making it universally beneficial.

We in India are conscious that the rapid changes brought about by technology and globalization have to be addressed with care and caution. We have to spread the benefits among all our people and manage the process of change with sensitivity. Government sees this as its responsibility.

How does business perceive its role and responsibility? What should be the concerns and obligations of industry?

Over the last three years, there has been enhanced partnership between Government and industry not only in the economic sector, but also in the social sector. A lot more can be achieved by strengthening this partnership.

Today, at this Economic Summit that has brought together captains of international and Indian business, 1 would like to share some thoughts on what could be the obligations of industry.

First, and foremost, is that business and industry, especially the foreign investors community, must have a long-term commitment to India. This is the only way we can build trust and a sustained relationship.

Second, as Government works to evolve a forward-looking Companies Act and Competition Laws, I seek from you a strong adherence to free and fair competition in the interest of consumers. Let us not follow the path of monopolies and cartels that serve the cause of few at the cost of many.

Third, today's India wants to see the corporate sector implementing higher standards of corporate governance. Each Indian and foreign company has a duty to be transparent, just as Governments at the Centre and in the States are trying to ensure transparency in policy-making. This is an issue that concerns small investors, minority shareholders and the

investing public. High standards of corporate governance will enhance the people's confidence in the private sector.

Fourth, I would urge you to invest more and more in human resource development. It would be beneficial in the long run to devote funds and time to training, re-training and education of your employees and their families. This will prepare them to meet the challenge of change which globalization inevitably brings.

Fifth, remember that technology is driving change. With India's outstanding scientific, technological and engineering talent, it will benefit everybody if you focus on research and development, innovation and technology building.

Sixth, consider India a profitable location not merely for out-sourcing of information technology services, but also for manufacturing. We have a strong manufacturing tradition; this will continue to exist, India seeks to be not only an IT hub, but also a manufacturing hub.

Seventh, be sensitive to environmental concerns. Insist on high standards of pollution control and ecological management.

Eighth, reach out to the rural sector not merely because it is large, but because the needs of rural India cannot be bypassed. The rural sector needs high quality products to derive the advantages of globalization.

Finally, no Government can alone meet the massive challenge of providing education and healthcare facilities to every family in a billion-strong country without all round cooperation.

Can each of CII's four thousand member companies and the three hundred foreign companies represented here take charge of at least one primary school and one healthcare centre to supplement Government's efforts in the social sector? Indeed, Indian industry as a whole must deepen its involvement in the crucial social sector of primary health and education.

Such a social partnership can transform India. If you strive

to realize these objectives, it will make a qualitative difference to our society.

If we enter into this partnership now, the image of globalization will change. Globalization will no longer be perceived as a threat, but an opportunity.

It will initiate a process that will enable all sections of society to participate in development and growth. A process in which the gains of income will be more equitably shared.

Friends,

That is why our Government is pursuing policies which aim to maximize the benefits of globalization while minimizing its risks and socially disturbing outcomes.

Supported by our strong macro-fundamentals, India will continue, for the eighth year in succession, to grow at over six per cent. This is coupled with modest inflation, comfortable foreign exchange reserves and outward looking policies.

Our intention is to double per capital income within one decade. This means an annual GDP growth of around eight to nine per cent.

Since we last met, our Government's focus has been on improving the quality of our national infrastructure. Let me mention some of them:

- The telecom sector has been totally deregulated.
- Entrepreneurial skill is now bringing in considerable private investment—both domestic and foreign—in this sector. Consumers have benefited from improved services and lower tariffs.
- A massive road building exercise is underway. Fresh contracts for over 2,500 km are being awarded by March 2001. New contracts at this level will continue for several years for enabling us to build a 6,000-km road network by 2003 and another 7,000 km by 2007.

- Several crippling problems of the power sector have received our close attention. Many State Governments have constituted independent Tariff Regulatory Authorities.
- An Electricity Bill, 2000 is in the offing.
- Our recent review suggests that as many as 10 power projects can reach financial closure by end-March, 2001.
- Our privatization policy involves important strategic sales in several significant areas that should strengthen our competitive efficiency.
- We have accorded priority to social sector development, particularly health, primary education, drinking water and rural road construction. Policies and programmes are being reshaped so that benefits of growth percolate to the masses.
- New technological innovations and the new economy industries, such as information technology, pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, are in the forefront of Government's attention. We will avoid the pitfalls of a digital divide so that the benefits of the information revolution are shared by all.

There is some evidence of a global slowdown. But, even within this framework, 1 am convinced that India's environment for business will improve steadily and significantly. This will encompass policy-making, procedures and implementation.

I have been taking personal interest in ensuring speed and transparency. A Strategic Management Group in my office is meeting every week to hasten the pace of implementation. I am receiving support from Chief Ministers many of whom have set up similar monitoring groups for their State Governments.

India will pursue with determination the reform strategy articulated in the manifesto of the National Democratic Alliance. The next generation of reforms entails difficult decisions. In implementing them, we will no doubt encounter resistance and transitional difficulties. But we shall overcome them.

We shall constantly endeavour to evolve national consensus. We believe that the agenda for economic change should not be unduly politicized.

Our goal is clear: We will globalize to India's advantage. In the process, we will ensure that the fruits of productivity and the gains of growth bring about a qualitative change in the life of our people.

Your partnership in our challenging task will be invaluable. I seek your cooperation in realizing our vision.

# Accelerating Economic Reforms

I HAVE BEEN looking forward to this interaction for a while. This is so because it comes at a time when we are getting mixed signals about the economy. There are many positive indicators. The macro-economic fundamentals continue to be strong. Exports have grown by over twenty-two per cent in the first half of the current year exceeding the target of eighteen per cent. The import growth has been more modest at fifteen per cent even though the high crude prices continue to generate pressures.

When we met last time I was greatly concerned about the fiscal deficit. Figures received a few days ago suggest that the fiscal deficit in the current year is around 5.1 per cent compared to a much higher figure in the preceding two years. The revenue deficit has also shrunk somewhat.

Industrial production, however, has grown at only 5.5 per cent in the first half of the current year as compared to

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Speech at the 3rd meeting of the PM's Council on Trade and Industries, New Delhi, 2 December 2000

6.4 per cent in the corresponding period of the previous year and 8.1 per cent in the whole of the previous year. The service sector of the economy accounting for a little under half of the GDP, had shown strong growth in the range of eight to nine per cent in each of the last three years. However, indications for the first half of the current year point to a slow down in the growth of this sector. Available data on capital goods production, capital goods imports, etc. also point to continued sluggishness in investment activity in the economy.

It is evident, therefore, that we need fresh growth impetus. This is necessary if the GDP targets for this year and for the next few years are to be realized. How do we spur investment initiatives, and more than that, reverse the sentiments in the private sector?

We on our part in the last couple of months have taken a number of steps to revive confidence in the economy and to manage the pressures on the external sector. Domestic prices of petroleum products have been adjusted to ensure that the burgeoning oil pool account deficit does not get out of control. The State Bank of India raised over five billion dollar through its India Millennium Deposit Scheme which has replenished our forex reserves and reflects external confidence. Firm control has been exercised over the fiscal situation to ensure that budgeted targets for revenue and expenditure are met. Far reaching reforms in the telecom sector are being pursued to implement the policy mandate of NTP-99. Bottlenecks in other infrastructure sectors such as roads and ports are being addressed. Some major logjams in the power sector are being resolved. Follow up action on the IRDA Act has been taken, with the first set of licences to private insurance providers issued in October 2000. The New Textile Policy has been announced which includes the long sought de-reservation of the garment sector.

We have recently announced a new National Agriculture

Policy which aims to increase the growth of farm produce by four per cent. It covers a wide range of measures to improve the efficiency and productivity of the agricultural sector. A Group under this Council had also made a number of suggestions on agriculture. Recently, for the first time, a National Storage Policy for attracting significant private investment to build modern silos has been notified. We need to have fresh look at the entire food-chain economy and also restructure the Food Corporation of India at the earliest.

These efforts would be intensified. We will monitor the progress made and ensure that decisions translate into action. If we can get investment going in the next couple of months, we can reverse some of the negative trends which I have pointed out. The issue of industrial revival is of critical importance and has, therefore, been placed as the foremost item in today's agenda. I welcome your valuable suggestions in this regard.

The second issue which is worrying us is the impact of the total withdrawal of Quantitative Restrictions (QRs) on Indian industry and agriculture. The dismantling of QRs forms part of the international arrangements which we have accepted and are obliged to honour. We have recently taken some steps to prevent dumping. These include a wide range of measures such as ensuring transparency in invoice value, tariff measures, adherence to standards and specifications and initiation of anti-dumping action. These measures would be strengthened in the coming months.

However, the Indian industry must adapt itself to face competition. An over-protectionist approach will only foster inefficiency. It will lead to stagnation. What are the steps which are necessary to enable Indian industry to face the inevitable challenge of competition? We must have a strategy and a design. Let us talk about that today. Let us also talk about how to harmonize the interests of consumers with the interests

of the industry. And how to combine the gains in productivity with the virtues of a non-disruptive transition?

Finally, the Budget is round the corner. Budget making is still a mystique. However, this is a good time to talk about what should go into Budget making. The Finance Minister, I have been assured, has come with an open mind. The Budget will come in the backdrop of Government's commitment to raise GDP growth rate to around 8 per cent or so. It will definitely be a forward looking Budget and go beyond the mere arithmetic of numbers to deal with issues and policies which can put us on a high growth path. What are the measures which at this juncture would impart the necessary momentum?

If we look back, our record of pursuing economic reforms by any reckoning has been significant. The last two years have seen major initiatives spanning the financial sector, capital markets, insurance, infrastructure, continuation of tax reforms, and persuading State Governments to adopt sound financial policies. It is easy to argue and difficult to contest that much more should have been done. Political management is after all the art of the possible. And we are steadily expanding the domain of the possible. All of us must recognize that soft reform options are now over. Further measures entail difficult decisions both by Central and State Governments. They also require building a political consensus. This is an area where all of you can play a constructive role. Indeed, we will require broad-based support and cooperation from all sections of society, if the ambitious reform measures are to be fully realized.

This is a broad and diverse canvas. It spans a number of issues not all of which are necessarily connected. But they are issues, which are bothering all of us. I look forward to your valued suggestions.

# Harnessing the Potential of Globalization

I AM PLEASED to be with you this afternoon to participate in the International Conference on "Globalization and Democracy". I congratulate the Inter-Parliamentary Union and FICCI for jointly organizing this conference.

In my long career in Parliament and in politics, I have participated in many meetings on democracy. In recent years, after globalization became a buzzword, I have also commented often on this subject. However, it is for the first time that I have come across an effort that seeks to understand democracy and globalization not separately, but in the way they impact on each other and on society at large.

This, I think, is the right approach. It is also the Indian approach to understanding any subject under the sun. Both our ancient and our modern philosophers have adopted a holistic and integral approach to understanding the natural as well as the social reality around them. The Indian mind does not look at any issue solely in its parts, but in the way the parts relate to each other, shape the external environment, and are, in turn, shaped by it.

Distinguished participants, every era in human history is driven by one big idea or the other. The dynamics of the era that we live in, however, is powered by two big ideas—Democracy and the concept of One Inter-dependent World. If the 18th and the 19th centuries belonged to the age of colonialism, the first part of the 20th century was swept by a worldwide wave of de-colonization. The end of colonial rule also saw the beginning of the global march of democracy.

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Speech while inaugurating the International Conference on "Globalization and Democracy", New Delhi, 5 December 2000

The 20th century marked a big leap forward for humanity. Many countries that gained independence embraced democracy without any prompting, persuasion, or pressure. India, as you all know, was the most prominent among them. Many others took time after gaining political freedom to adopt a democratic system of governance, but adopt it they certainly did.

Those dictatorships that resisted the will of the people were swept away. Totalitarian regimes tottered. Ideologies that rationalized tyranny were isolated. Barring a few exceptions, most nations of the world have today accepted democracy as the natural system of governance. Let there be no doubt in anyone's mind that democracy will triumph even in the few remaining outposts of autocracy.

Why did democracy gain worldwide acceptance? After all, the peoples of the world belong to different cultures. They have their origins in different civilizations. They also are at different levels of socio-economic development. Despite this divergence, democracy has become their convergent choice.

This only goes to prove that democracy is of universal value. It is not more suited to the rich and less suited to the poor. It does not make itself more amenable to the developed than to the less developed nations. Women do not choose it any less than men do. Likewise, it is not the favourite of the educated more than it is of the unlettered. As election after election has shown, the poor and the less educated in India are far more enthusiastic participants in the democratic process than their more privileged counterparts.

This is not surprising. For, they have known the power of democracy. In the past fifty years, more and more under-privileged and under-represented sections of our society are asserting their democratic rights. Our Constitution has proactively provided for several measures of affirmative action, to remove social disabilities, provide educational opportunities, and promote the economic uplift of the poor and marginalized. Their steadily growing political empowerment has shown democracy to be a great leveler.

This is not the story of India alone. Every democratic country, in its own unique way, has experienced how, despite all its deficiencies, people's role is the only right rule. Nations have also learnt that, even the deficiencies of democracy can be satisfactorily addressed only in a democratic way.

Friends, no one can now dispute that democracy has now become a global idea and a global ideal. However, the question that many people around the world have been asking is: "Has globalization embraced the idea and the ideals of democracy?" In other words; democracy has been globalized, but has globalization been democratized?

This issue deserves to be debated far more seriously than has been the case so far. I would like to share some of my thoughts on this topic.

All of us know that globalization has become a reality. Indeed, an inescapable reality. The world has become more inter-dependent than ever before, vindicating what India's ancient *rishis* had proclaimed thousands of years ago: *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*—namely: The Entire World is One Family.

Unfortunately, globalization has so far been projected merely as a magical phenomenon of technology and trade, and of the mesmerizing movement of finance capital and knowledge capital. No doubt, it is all this.

Nobody could have imagined even a few decades ago that trillions of dollars of investible capital can be moved from one end of the world to another in just a few seconds and with just a click of a computer mouse.

By the way, who could have imagined that the mouse would one day come to mean something that most office-workers would always keep their hands on?

Who could have imagined that the Web would one day come to mean something that millions around the world would gladly get entangled into?

The Information and Communication Revolution promises to make anywhere and anytime connectivity an affordable reality for everyone on earth. The global trade in goods and services promises prosperity to all countries and to all the citizens of every country on earth.

If this is the great promise of globalization, all of us should seriously ask ourselves: Why globalization has not met with enthusiastic acceptance by all the people all over the world? The answer, according to me, lies in our failure to cast globalization in a democratic mould. Whatever its promise—and I have no doubt that it is a believable promise—globalization is yet to demonstrate that it is of the people, for the people, and by the people.

Nearly two-thirds of humanity is yet to benefit from its fruits, even though the riches and the comforts of the remaining one-third have grown faster than before. This divide is unsustainable. Indeed, it is potentially a threat to peace, stability, and orderly progress.

That is why we need to urgently reform the process of globalization. We need to redefine its objectives and reorient its priorities. Its objectives and priorities will have to become the same as those of democracy—economic justice, social justice, gender justice, and balanced development of all the regions, all the races, and all the communities in every nation and in all nations. I need not add that the rich nations, who have benefited more from globalization, have a greater responsibility to reform it.

The new global order will have to reflect the spirit of democracy in all its institutions—above all, in the United Nations, which is the most important global institution. Its democratization is long overdue. Indeed, this was the consistent and overarching theme of what most Heads of State and Government said at the recently concluded Millennium Summit of the United Nations.

To those members of the business community who are

participating in this conference, I reiterate the appeal I have made before. It is your responsibility not only to run your businesses better by seizing the opportunities of globalization, but also to reach its fruits to the society that sustains you. Both the Government and business community have to work in close partnership to demonstrate to the people that globalization works for their good, that economic reforms will make their lives better. We shall succeed in our reforms initiative to the extent that we can build popular support around them.

Friends, I am happy that this international conference is being held in India. We are the world's largest democracy. One of the proudest achievements of this most diverse nation in the world, since its independence fifty years ago, has been its zealous defence of democracy. India has not only defended democracy but has also steadily deepened and developed it.

Of course, we are not satisfied with all that we have achieved. We are well aware of the shortcomings of our democracy and we are determined to overcome them.

One of the many ways in which we seek to enrich our democracy is by harnessing the full potential of globalization. As you all know the process of economic reforms that we began a decade ago is steadily gaining momentum. External liberalization is an integral part of our economic reforms, although we shall implement it in a manner and at a pace, which is consistent with our national needs. This, we believe, is the democratic right of every nation.

We shall fully use the power of science and technology to modernize our economy. We shall fully seize the opportunities afforded by foreign investments and global trade to speed up our socio-economic development. We are confident that a prosperous India, which is home to one-sixth of the human race, will be a powerful contributor to the progress of both democracy and globalization around the world.

In this process, we are ever ready to learn from the positive experiences of democracies around the world. That

is why, I am heartened by the presence of parliamentarians of so many countries at this conference. I congratulate the Interparliamentary Union for making such mutually beneficial interaction possible.

I particularly wish to commend the contribution of the Speaker of our Lower House, Shri Balayogi, and the Deputy Chairperson of the Upper House, Dr. Najma Heptulla, to this endeavour.

Let me conclude by wishing this conference all success.

# Implementing Anti-poverty Programmes More Effectively

I AM SURE that we all share the view that the single biggest challenge facing us is the eradication of poverty from our country. Over the years, the Government has launched a number of initiatives for tackling poverty directly. Nevertheless, there appears to be a feeling in all of us that these various anti-poverty programmes are not having the effect that they should have, and that there is need to review the nature of these schemes and the manner in which they are implemented. A number of MPs have also expressed the view that the degree of involvement of MPs in most of these programmes is inadequate and that unless greater involvement is brought about, these schemes may continue to be ineffective.

In view of the importance of this issue, I had requested the Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission and the Minister of State for planning to hold a preliminary meeting with the Leaders of Parties in Parliament so that the main issues can

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Speech at the meeting held with the leaders of political parties in Parliament on Anti-poverty Programmes, New Delhi, 8 December 2000

be concretized. Many of you had participated in that meeting chaired by the Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission. As I understand it, the main conclusion of this meeting was that in order to make our anti-poverty schemes and programmes more effective there would have to be greater and more effective decentralization of their operation and implementation. Secondly, it was felt that along with the participation of the elected representatives of the people it would be necessary to mobilize other important members of our society.

Today's meeting has been called so that we can together discuss what precise measures are necessary to improve the working of our anti-poverty schemes so that the Government can draw up a plan of action for reviewing and revising the structure of these schemes. As the involvement of MPs is concerned, the Agenda Papers described the manner in which we have sought their involvement. If anything further needs to be done then we can discuss that as well. I would now invite you to give your views on how best we can reformulate anti poverty programmes to have the maximum impact on the poor of this country.

# Steel Industry Scaling Greater Heights

I AM HAPPY that I have now been able to keep my date with India's steel industry and to give away the Prime Minister's Trophy for the Best Integrated Steel Plant to Bhilai Steel Plant for 1997-98 and the Tata Iron and Steel Company for 1998-99. I congratulate both winners, in particular the Bhilai Steel Plant, which has won this trophy for the fifth time.

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Speech while presenting the Prime Minister's Trophy for the Best Integrated Steel Plant, New Delhi, 13 December 2000

Friends, I am aware of the importance of steel in India's economy. I shared the joy of every Indian in the late 1950s and early 60s as India's big integrated steel plants were set up. These were certainly powerful symbols of India's economic resurgence after Independence.

I was equally happy to know that the industry did not rest on its laurels. A massive modernization programme was launched in the late 1980s and early 1990s to modernize our steel plants. Since our economic reforms in 1991, our industry has grown even faster. In the last decade, twelve million tonnes of steel capacity were added, almost all of which were in the private sector. India today has the tenth largest steel industry in the world.

I am aware that the Indian steel industry is passing through a critical phase, in line with the world steel industry. Steel prices have fallen because global demand has fallen. In India too, the demand for steel could not pick up due to various reasons. What is to be done? I have gone through the well-researched 'Profile of the Indian Iron and Steel Industry', brought out by the Joint Plant Committee and I found some startling facts.

Our labour productivity is low. A South Korean company's productivity, as measured by metric tonnes per man year is almost thirteen times higher than that of SAIL. However, it is good that some progress has been made in rationalizing the workforce of our steel industry; but we need to do more. In India itself, I see from the publication, a new private steel plant is able to produce nearly the same quantity of steel as an older private plant, but employing only one-twentieth of the workforce.

Further, transport costs are too high. It is indeed shocking that it costs much more to ship one tonne of steel from Jamshedpur to Mumbai than it costs to import it all the way from Rotterdam. Steel accounts for fourteen per cent of the goods traffic of our Railways. Such volumes should give you the clout to negotiate more competitive rates for your industry.

You also suffer from high costs of fuel, electricity, and other administered prices.

Indian industry should be ready to meet these challenges, which are going to be fierce, not only from within the country but also from outside. We should have a well-planned strategy to meet this test. We are blessed with the finest minerals used in the steel industry and have many scientists and technologists. We are also strategically located. I do not see any reason why we cannot be successful, like some developed economies, who do not have as much natural resources as we do. This calls for a total commitment from promoters, management, and workers of the Indian steel industry. The fact that Indian managers, scientists, and IT professionals are much sought after in even developed countries is indeed a tribute to our ability. We are second to none and we must prove it too.

I am sure that the measures taken by my Government for infrastructure development will stimulate steel demand in the country. Steel is the most important engineering and construction material in the modern world and plays an essential role in meeting the challenge of sustainable development in the twenty first century. I have full faith in the future of the steel industry.

My confidence in India's steel making industry is matched by the expertise shown abroad by Indian steel makers. If an Indian, in just two decades, has created one of the world's largest and fastest-growing steel companies, and can manage one of the largest integrated steel plants in the world, I am sure that our domestic steel industry too can scale greater heights of success with the help of a proper policy environment.

The Steel Ministry has rightly identified the adoption of eco-friendly measures and quality control in their Vision 2020. While we strive to produce more and more steel, we should also preserve our environment. The industry should not consider investment in pollution control as a wasteful expenditure. We should strive towards zero-solid waste

generation, so that indiscriminate waste disposal does not contaminate Mother Nature.

I would like to emphasize continuing research and development to improve quality and lower costs. The Steel Development Fund has a yearly allocation of Rs. 150 crore for R&D; I would like the industry, including the private sector to make full use of this fond. Better-quality finished products not only will help you win market share in domestic and global markets, it will also make a direct difference to the lives of the final consumers. For example, consistently good quality steel rails would help our Railways improve their efficiency and safety. Similarly, better quality steel would allow the makers of consumer durables to produce better products that will, in turn, increase their sales.

My Government is implementing the second generation of economic reforms. This will bring more opportunities and challenges. There will be more competition in the international market from major steel producing countries in the world. Government will try to give the Indian steel industry a level playing field, but the industry should not depend on the Government alone for protective measures. We have to reduce our cost of production of steel and to produce steel of world-class quality. However, let me assure you that no injustice will be allowed to be perpetuated on any segment of Indian industry, whether from within or from outside.

I also believe that using the full benefits of Information Technology will give a big boost to the competitiveness of our steel industry. If we combine India's newly-developed powers in IT with the enormous resources of coal and iron that Mother Nature has endowed on us, we should be able to build a world-beating steel industry.

Coming back to the Prime Minister's trophy, I would like to make a suggestion for its future. Today, this trophy is given to an integrated steel plant. Most of these plants are in the public sector, which is why Bhilai has, deservedly, won the prize so often. However, today, it is the private sector, which accounts for a growing share of the steel industry. Thanks to

changing technology, they may not always go in for an integrated steel plant, since other ways of making steel may be equally competitive.

Therefore, to make this most important prize in our steel sector applicable to the entire industry, I would like that in future, this prize be given, not to an integrated steel plant, but to an entire large Indian steel company. This could be in the private or public sector. It could use any technology. The award should be given for the biggest improvement in some well-defined criteria in the previous year.

It is also time that we honour the memories of the pioneers of the steel industry in India—Jamsetji Tata and M. Visveswarayya. It would be in the fitness of things if this prize was renamed from that of the Prime Minister's trophy to the Visveswarayya trophy or Jamsetji Tata trophy. Prime Ministers will come and go.

Let me conclude by wishing you all the best for the next year and the next decade. India's steel industry has had a big role in building a modern India in the last fifty years. I am sure that it will continue to have an important role in the next fifty years in building the India of our dreams.

# Accelerate Our Growth Rate

I AM HAPPY to be with you this morning. I hope the, unnecessary political controversy of the week gone by is behind us. It is time now for all of us to refocus our attention on the most important agenda before the nation—namely, development. Faster, more balanced, and more equitable development.

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Speech at the 73rd Annual General Meeting of FICCI, New Delhi, 16 December 2000

Your annual general meeting comes at an opportune moment. The economy continues to show a mixed picture, which is why both Government and Industry need to introspect.

There are many positive indicators. Macro-fundamentals continue to be strong. Inflation is modest, despite record oil prices. Our external reserves are at an all-time high. Exports have exceeded targets. The current account deficit is within manageable limits. The fiscal deficit is lower than in the previous two years, in addition, as you know well, sectoral reforms are continuing in many areas.

Yet, there are worries, in many areas of the economy, there are problems of unmet demand. At the same time, there is also excess capacity in some segments. I know that there are widespread concerns about the impact of dismantling of quantitative restrictions.

The high cost of finance for Indian business continues to worry us, as much as it worries you. This problem is compounded by persistent weaknesses in infrastructure, which further adds to the cost of doing business in India.

Some of these problems are a part of the normal business cycle. Others, however, are endemic. They need stronger measures to overcome them.

I would like to take this opportunity to reassure you that my Government believes in solving the problems at hand, and not in evading them. You know how, despite all the odds, we have continued to move forward. The pace may be slow. Indeed, I am as concerned about the slow pace of the resolution of problems as you are.

We are not lacking in the political will to carry forward the reform process. The senior levels of the bureaucracy are wedded to the reforms agenda. I am, however, disheartened that, overall, the system of implementation still works with the same old mindset.

A mindset in which there is no transparent accountability and no drive to meet stipulated targets and deadlines. Our

people are impatient for results. The Government machinery, however, shows, no such sense of impatience and urgency.

Reforms in India are now nearly a decade old. And all the four different governments in this period have pursued the reforms agenda without major deviations. All of them, however, have been disappointed at the slow pace with which decisions get translated into actions.

If the experience of the past ten years has taught us any one lesson, it is that reform of the implementation system must be made an integral part of the reforms process itself.

I am aware of the enormity of this task. But we have begun to address this imperative. The Strategic Management Group, which has been recently set up, has begun its work in right earnest.

We are committed to carry forward the next and more difficult phase of our reforms. These include removing all the remaining bottlenecks to the faster growth of infrastructure.

Power-related issues require greater co-ordination with State Governments. They also require project-specific solutions. The Group under the Power Minister is sorting these problems. I have been assured that quite a few of these problems have been resolved and many projects will reach financial closure by March 31 next year.

I also propose to convene a special meeting of Chief Ministers so that an agreed programme for power reforms can be finalized.

The subsisting problems of the telecom sector are being resolved. We shall take further measures to accelerate the work of the National Highway Development Project. Civil Aviation, too, will see some important reforms in the coming months.

In Information Technology, the biggest challenge is to quickly increase the number of well-trained professionals to meet the growing demands of both the domestic and foreign markets. A high-powered Task Force is looking into this matter.

We shall also initiate necessary action to promote the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries, where we have a strong competitive advantage.

Railways are a key infrastructure, whose better functioning will help the economy in a big way. However, they need urgent reforms. The management of the Railways needs radical restructuring to separate rail operations from planning and policy making. Large investments in renovation and modernization are required to improve safety standards.

Clearly, we need to increase the investible funds for the Railways through innovative, non-traditional, and commercially oriented methods. The creation of RailTel Corporation is the first step in this direction. The Government will soon take several other measures to increase efficiency and productivity in the Indian Railways.

We are awaiting the comprehensive recommendations of the Rakesh Mohan Committee on Railway Reforms. The Government will study the report and quickly implement the accepted recommendations.

I wish to touch upon two more important points.

The first is the non-productive expenditure of the Government. This continues to be a source of worry. It is linked with the question of downsizing of Government. While everybody in my Government agrees that the size of the bureaucracy is bigger than it should be, and Government is not about giving jobs, very little has been done to actually reduce its size.

We have now received recommendations of the Expenditure Reforms Commission. It has given specific suggestions to reduce staff size through attrition and how to treat surplus staff. We need to announce a timetable and set milestones for each department to reduce the sanctioned strength of their staff at least by 10 per cent by 2004.

Manten Government-run companies have adopted an attractive Voluntary Retirement Scheme. We need a similar one

for the Government too. We also need to actively encourage educated people to look for private-sector jobs or to set up their own businesses rather than somehow trying to secure a government job.

The second is about reworking our labour laws and rules. It has often been argued that many of our present labour laws and regulations are, in effect, anti-labour, because they inhibit the growth of employment. While they may provide protection to the existing labour force, the inflexibility of laws hinders new employment.

We need to modernize our labour laws for the larger benefit of the economy. Laws also need to be unified and made more harmonious. Efficiency and productivity are necessary for enabling us to reach our growth potential. I urge all those, associated with this issue to give it a serious consideration keeping in mind the interests of the nation as a whole, and not of any section.

I am confident that the measures that the Government is taking will accelerate our economy's growth rate. They will also spur investment and demand. However, I must frankly tell you that Indian industry also needs to do a lot of soul searching.

The track record of Indian industry in adjusting itself to the forces of global competition has been a mixed one.

Many manufacturing industries, for instance, have not significantly improved their production process to make good quality products at affordable prices to enhance consumer satisfaction. This should change.

Except for pharmaceuticals, very few companies have invested four to five percent of their revenue on research and development to create world-class products and processes. This too must change.

Indian companies should adopt high standards of transparency, disclosure, and corporate governance to sustain investor and shareholders confidence.

In this context, I must also express my dismay that there are some companies that have taken money from shareholders, banks, and financial institutions and misused it. This does not create any public goodwill for business.

The partnership between Government and Industry must be strengthened. It is the most important precondition to accelerate our growth rate to meet the nine per cent yearly target that I had set in my Independence Day speech this year. Only this will allow us to double our per capita income in ten years and make India a global economic power.

In this, Government must respond to new challenges quickly and flexibly. At the same time, industry must also recognize its responsibilities by putting its house in order and act with vision and foresight.

I have often urged Indian business to discharge its social responsibility in a more visible and effective manner than has been the case so far. It is an appeal that I make again today. The challenges of India's social sector development are daunting. As all of us know, the resources of the Central and State Governments are insufficient to meet these challenges.

Indian businesses should set aside a significant part of their earnings as well as their human resources to improve the conditions of education, healthcare, sanitation, and community welfare. I know that many of your members are already doing it. I commend them for this good work. But, since the challenge is so great, your response should be commensurate.

In this context, I am reminded of the positive interaction I recently had with representatives of Indian business on the occasion of World AIDS Day. Many good suggestions and offers were made to enhance the participation of the business community in our battle against this dreaded disease. I urge all of you to draw up a plan of action to supplement the Government's efforts.

I do hope that your deliberations today and tomorrow will result in further cementing this partnership. Together, we

have a duty to create confidence among our countrymen, especially among the poor and less-privileged, that economic reforms will benefit them. We should be able to meet their rising expectations for more employment opportunities and a better quality of life.

In other words, the partnership for reforms must include not only the Government and Industry, but also the People of India. I seek your cooperation in realizing this shared vision.

# Adding Wings to Silicon Valley

I AM HAPPY to be present on this memorable occasion. Bangalore is the pride of India.

The new International Airport that it is going to have will also be a pride of India.

Today we are doing the "Shri Ganesh" of a novel airport project with private sector participation, a prestigious venture in the history of civil aviation in India.

Bangalore is the aerospace capital of the country. It has many prestigious institutions like ISRO, HAL, NAL, ADA, and others.

Bangalore is also widely regarded as the "Silicon Valley" of India because of its high software exports.

Bangalore has earned a name for itself on the IT map of the world.

Therefore, it deserves nothing less than a world-class airport.

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Speech while inaugurating the construction of the new Bangalore International Airport, Bangalore, 19 January 2001

Karnataka is a State that has a congenial industrial climate and has attracted high investments in various sectors.

Moreover, Karnataka is also blessed with scenic beauty, and many historical sites. It has a huge untapped tourist potential.

There is also a big opportunity for exports of floriculture and other high-value but perishable agricultural commodities.

The limitations of the existing airport have started restricting growth in passenger and cargo traffic in Karnataka.

A new international airport in Bangalore was a long standing demand of the Government and the people of Karnataka.

All political parties in the State are united behind this demand.

I remember that I had responded to this demand while inaugurating the prestigious Bangalore IT.Com Conference in November 1998.

Now the time has come to redeem this common wish of all of us. I am happy that I am here with you to do a virtual Bhoomi Poojan for the construction of this airport.

I must mention here that Shri Ananth Kumar, when he was the Civil Aviation Minister, did much to move this idea forward.

I am sure that his successor, Shri Sharad Yadav, will ensure the success of this project.

I assure you that the project will not suffer from the delay that has marked its initial conceptual stage.

If we want to build an airport to service airplanes that can fly at supersonic speed, our machinery for approval and implementation must also work with supersonic speed.

Therefore, let the new Bangalore airport become a model for all such prestigious infrastructure projects, proving that India can build world-class projects on world-class schedules.

I look forward to seeing its earliest possible completion.

I am told that the Bangalore International Airport Company will start pre-project work from today itself, even before the private partner is identified.

By spending Rs. 300 crore over the next four to five months in buying the land, leveling it, getting environment clearances, and other works, you will hasten the actual construction of the airport.

We should follow a similar approach in all infrastructure projects, irrespective of whether they are built by the public sector or the joint sector, to ensure that there are no time and cost-overruns.

By completing all the pre-project work, government will ensure the chances of the final project being built even faster, since the private builder can then get on with the technical work of actually putting up the project.

Airports also represent a country's window to the world. Passengers form their first impressions about a nation from the state of its airports.

They can be effectively used as symbols of national pride, if we pay sufficient attention to their quality and maintenance.

I am really proud of this pioneering idea of the State Government to construct the airport with private participation.

This will be a living example of ideal Centre-State relationship.

# Collective Global Action for Sustainable Development

I AM HAPPY to be with all of you this morning at this important summit on sustainable development. I am gratified by the presence here of many eminent participants, from both developed and developing countries, besides senior representatives of key international organizations and NGOs.

I congratulate the Tata Energy Research Institute for three praiseworthy features of this summit. First, the Delhi Summit seeks to amplify the voice of developing countries in the worldwide debate on this important subject. Second, the main theme of the summit is eradication of poverty, which is also the core issue that globalization must address. Lastly, I commend the organizers for recognizing that poverty is a global challenge, not only for governments, but also for industry, scientists, and the whole civil society.

The past decade was marked by two landmark events. The Earth Summit at Rio de Janerio in 1992 placed sustainable development on top of the global agenda. Never before had the world community acknowledged so powerfully that development is either sustainable, or it cannot be called "development" at all. Three years later, in 1995, the World Trade Organization came into being, which formalized the advent of a global market.

Since then the debate on globalization and sustainable development has grown, both in its dimensions and dynamism. There is an increasing awareness that only concerted and coordinated global action can meet the challenges of poverty alleviation, environment protection, and balanced development.

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Speech while inaugurating the Summit on Sustainable Development, New Delhi, 7 February 2001

For meaningful and effective global action, we must, first of all, recognize the magnitude of global iniquities. The World Development Indicators of the World Bank indicate that a sixth of the world's people receives 78 per cent of world income, which amounts to $70 a day. At the same time, three-fifths of the world's people living in the poorest 61 countries receive only 6 percent of the world's income, which is less than $2 a day.

Several stark facts about global poverty stare us in our face at the dawn of the age of globalization. The percentage of people living below the poverty line may have come down in several countries—as it indeed has in India. However, the relative gap between the rich and the poor has widened, both within nations and amongst nations. The benefits of technology, trade, and other opportunities presented by globalization have spread unevenly. As a result, the rate at which poverty is being eradicated has not kept pace with the rate at which the rich are getting richer.

It is equally clear that poverty can no longer be seen exclusively in static income terms. What matters more than income levels is the access, or lack of it, to entitlements and opportunities for a happy life. Deprivation of normal family and community relationships, and lack of opportunities to advance one's own cultural life, have also become important features of poverty in modern times. For example, an urban migrant worker living in a dehumanizing and impersonal slum may earn more than what he was when living in a village in a harmonious social and natural milieu. But, he cannot be considered to be living a better and fulfilling life.

Both the magnitude and the changing meaning of poverty have made one thing clear. Poverty cannot be removed by the traditional strategy of income enhancement of all, in the simplistic hope that higher incomes will naturally buy all the necessary entitlements. Consumerism of the super-rich has become a curse for the global environment. We can hardly hope to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development by globalizing this curse. It is impossible for the lifestyles of

rich nations to be replicated all over the world without putting a ruinous pressure on the earth's limited resources.

Just as we have become more aware of the meaning of poverty, so too have we become more sensitive to the meaning of development. More and more people around the world are wondering if we are losing sight of man and his deeper aspirations in the one-dimensional race for economic growth. Industrial civilization has led to unprecedented levels of material wealth. At the same time, it has also brought about an unprecedented imbalance between material and psychological affluence.

The world community cannot be blind to the implications of this imbalance. Therefore, in the new century, the world needs to put more emphasis on the realization of new lifestyles, driven by a set of values that emphasize compassion, cooperation, care of the environment, and the joy of living.

Distinguished delegates, all of us know that a narrowly-focused economic model can neither remove global poverty nor yield sustainable development. At the same time, we cannot belittle the importance of restructuring the economic relations between and within countries. What we need is a comprehensive and holistic global strategy, which involves the fullest mobilization of all our economic, social, cultural, and technological resources.

In this context, I wish to put before you a few thoughts for your consideration.

First, there is a need to substantially increase the resources of governments in developing countries to pursue developmental projects and programmes aimed specifically at poverty eradication. The resources of multilateral and bilateral development agencies also need to be significantly enhanced. This calls for a far higher level of political will in industrialized countries than is manifest today. In particular, I would like developed countries to cooperate in speedy conclusion of the international agreement on climate change.

Second, it is high time that we considered imposition of an international levy on capital flows between developed countries, and all capital repatriations from developing countries. The proceeds may be credited to a Global Poverty Alleviation Fund, which could have the following objectives.

The accelerated liquidation of all public external debts of low-income countries.

Poverty alleviation programmes specifically targeted at those who have lost their livelihoods in economic crises brought about by reversal of external capital flows in developing countries.

Enhancement of skills and increased access to finance needed by the poor to compete effectively in the global economy.

Placing technologies that save lives, increase food yields, generate renewable energy for rural areas, and facilitate the adoption of clean production, in the public domain, for use by developing countries.

Third, technology—especially, information technology—has created a massive growth in productivity. IT has also proved to be a revolutionary tool for education, healthcare and sustainable development. However, the unequal access to IT has given rise to legitimate fears of a "Digital Divide". We need collective global action to speedily bridge the gap between IT haves and have-nots. In this context, India is ready to offer our expertise to others. We are also willing to learn from others' successful experiences.

Fourth, there is also a need for greater global cooperation to deal with natural calamities, especially in developing countries. The poor always lose proportionately much more than the rich in natural calamities. Information and critical technologies that can prevent disasters, contain their damage, and help in better management of relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction, should be available to all countries. In this context, I gratefully acknowledge the generous help that India

has received from the international community after the devastating earthquake in Gujarat last month.

I am happy that TERI has brought out an excellent publication called *Disha* to mark the Delhi Summit on Sustainable Development. It focuses on green technologies, the use of market-based instruments, a new code of ethics for the corporate sector, and effective governance at all levels. As the book persuasively argues, government, civil society, research institutions, and the corporate sector will have to work in partnership to reach the goals that we set ourselves for the future.

In particular, we need the participation of the people in all aspects of sustainable development, whether it is community-run water harvesting, or it is in replacing older transport vehicles with newer pollution-free CNG vehicles, or in removing polluting industries from residential areas, to name three recent issues. In this, Governments and NGOs have to work in close cooperation with each other.

For instance, the Gujarat Government's Sardar Patel Participatory Water Conservation Programme, launched in January 2000, has successfully led to the creation of nearly 10,500 check dams built with people's participation. The media too has an important role to play, in highlighting the imperative of such constructive partnership.

Friends, you will deliberate on many important issues relating to sustainable development during the three-day summit. The participants from India can learn much from the international experience. At the same time, I am sure that the distinguished foreign delegates will also get a better appreciation of India's experience in poverty eradication and sustainable development.

With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating this summit.

# A Common Approach to Power Sector Reforms

WE HAVE GATHERED here today for an important Conference. It is taking place at a critical juncture in the economic history of our country. Ahead of us lies the road to a bright future. But that road is made bumpy by the many problems of the present.

One of these major problems is in the power sector. I am sure that this Conference will candidly consider all aspects of the challenges in this vital infrastructure area and evolve a sound strategy to put it on a sustainable growth path.

There is no doubt that India's performance in power since Independence has been impressive. Our path of self-reliance has vindicated itself. Our PSUs in this sector, such as BHEL, NTPC, NHPC, NPCIL, PGCIL, and others have an outstanding record of commercial success and service to the nation.

However, this remarkable performance cannot overshadow the fact that it falls well short of the country's rapidly growing energy needs. Even today, as many as 80,000 of our villages are without electricity. Less than 40 per cent of our rural households have access to electricity. The momentum of expanding rural electrification has visibly faltered during the last ten years. With your support, we would like to include rural electrification as a Basic Minimum Service in the planning process and set before ourselves the national goal of completing this task by the year 2007, the last year of the Tenth Plan.

It is a matter of abiding concern that our per capita consumption of electricity is among the lowest in the world. It is only 350 units a year. What is equally worrisome is that

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Address at the Chief Ministers' Conference on Power Sector Reforms, New Delhi, 3 March 2001

those industries, which have an undisputed potential for wealth and employment generation, are starved of adequate and assured power.

Indian industry and agriculture cannot compete in the international market, nor can they ward off competition by foreign products in the domestic market, without reliable supply of electricity at an affordable cost. The process of globalization will further accentuate these disadvantages, if we do not take immediate remedial steps.

In view of our rapidly growing needs, we need to add 100,000 megawatts to our generation capacity in the next ten years. In other words, we have to achieve in the next 10 years what we could achieve in all of the last 53 years. This massive programme will cost Rs. 800,000 crore including the associated costs in transmission and distribution systems. Nearly half of these resources have to come from private and foreign investments.

Friends, today we must honestly admit that our attempts to reform the power sector have not moved smoothly. Several projects promoted by the private sector have failed to take off, even though an enabling policy framework has been in place for the past eight years. Till date Independent Power Producers have added only 5,000 megawatts of capacity. And only 5,000 megawatts of capacity is under construction. Many viable projects have not been able to achieve financial closure due to the inability of the State Power Utilities to have an adequate payment security mechanism.

Why has this situation arisen? It is principally because we failed to address the problems in this sector with a comprehensive and long-term national vision. Our efforts were partial, and the parts did not connect and complement one another. Generation, transmission, distribution, and consumption of electricity are parts of an integral cycle. Reforms in the crucial initial stages failed to take this into account. We should have focussed on reforms in distribution before, or at least simultaneously with, those in generation.

Our reforms faltered on another self-evident count. Ours is a Federal structure. Reforms can yield the desired results only if there is good coordination between the Centre and the States. Electricity is on the Concurrent List and the responsibility for distribution lies with the States. Hence, it was clear from the very outset that reforms in the power sector would not succeed without the fullest participation of the State Governments.

All of us know that the main problem in the area of distribution is the poor health of almost all the State Electricity Boards. This is because we have not been implementing the sensible commercial principle that he who uses electricity pays for it. One can understand—indeed, justify—the provision of subsidized power to poor farmers, cottage industries, and to the households of vulnerable sections of our society. But today there are many other categories of users who get electricity either free or at highly subsidized rates in the name of agriculture. At any rate, the subsidies in deserving cases should be provided for explicitly through budgetary support. They cannot be sustained by irrational cross-subsidization or at the expense of the financial viability of the SEBs.

To make matters worse, only 40 percent of the power supply in India is billed. And not all those billed are made to pay. The combined effect of all this is the stupendous losses of our SEBs, which now stand at an unsustainable level of Rs. 24,000 crore each year. These losses have also further worsened the fiscal health of many State Governments.

In addition to the unacceptably high technical losses in transmission and distribution, our SEBs are saddled with what Shri Yashwant Sinha called the "other" T&D losses—namely, Theft and Dacoity losses. I am told that the country loses as much as Rs. 20,000 crore in theft of power each year. Should we not resolve to eliminate these losses in two years? I suggest that all States implement a monitorable action plan to complete tamper-proof metering for all consumers within one year.

Friends, this is the fourth such Conference in the past five years. We have taken many sensible decisions, starting with the recommendations of the Committee of the National Development Council comprising six Chief Ministers in 1993. But I must confess that their implementation on the ground has been very feeble. We need to speed up the reform process with a sense of urgency, so that its impact can be felt on the financial health of our SEBs and in the flow of private investments in this sector.

The reform process has been a useful learning experience for all of us. In the initial phase of reforms in the power sector, we adopted an approach of guaranteed returns to the private producers. This made the tariff unacceptably high. The Dabhol Power Project in Maharashtra is a notable example. I hope that this issue will be resolved soon. It has once again highlighted the need for a holistic and long-term approach to power sector reforms.

As the Agenda Notes underscore, our priority should be to make distribution commercially viable, so that it can boost private investors' confidence in generation and transmission projects. We should also enable some IPPs to achieve financial closure at the earliest. We should initiate measures to improve operational efficiency of State Power Utilities through structural reforms, refurbishment of old generating units, and reduction of distribution losses. There is a good suggested action point in the Agenda Papers for franchising the responsibility of bill collection in towns and rural areas to municipal councils, panchayats, and cooperatives.

Closely linked with the strategy to revive the SEBs is the question of agricultural tariff. Our farmers know that their interests will be better served if we can give them assured supply, even if they have to pay an affordable rate for it. They are all too aware of the disadvantages of free but erratic supply. I believe that our farmers will support our initiatives if we sincerely explain our overall reform strategy to them. To begin with, we should implement the Common Minimum

National Action Plan, adopted by the Chief Ministers' Conference in 1996. It had set a tariff of at least 50 paise a unit for agriculture, and urged for its further revision to 50 percent of the average cost in three years.

Similarly, we should make concerted efforts to mobilize the support of other categories of consumers and the employees of SEBs for our reform initiatives.

I would urge all States to make State Electricity Regulatory Commissions functional in the next six months and to abide by their tariff orders.

A comprehensive Electricity Bill will be introduced in this session of Parliament. Its enactment will provide a legal framework for State Government to undertake reforms in the power sector. I compliment the Government of Orissa for having taken far-reaching steps in this process. Similarly, the Governments of Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Delhi have initiated measures to unbundle and eventually privatize or commercialize distribution.

The Centre has taken many steps to support the reforms being attempted by the State Governments. I recognize that each State has its own problems and needs to chart its own path for reforms. It is not our intention to present a single blueprint for all the States. The Ministry of Power is, therefore, entering into State-specific Memoranda of Understanding to support them to undertake specific time-bound programme of reforms.

I am glad that the Ministry of Power is giving a new thrust to hydropower development. We have a large untapped hydropower potential of over 1,50,000 MW, which we must develop fully in the next few decades. The development of some good projects is being unnecessarily delayed due to inter-State differences. I am sure that, with mutual goodwill and cooperation, we can soon resolve these differences for the benefit of all.

I would like this Conference also to deliberate on how to accelerate harnessing of renewable sources of energy. Our goal is to increase the share of renewables to 10 percent of the additional planned capacity in the next ten years—that is, 10,000 MW. We need to promote wind power farms and bagasse-based cogeneration units in sugar mills through an intensive programme. Apart from adding to our generation capacity, cogeneration units will also benefit sugarcane growers and the sugar industry, which is currently going through a rough patch.

Conservation of energy has today become almost as important as its generation. There is a vast potential for reducing energy consumption without affecting the productivity in various sectors of the economy. We need to build a strong nation-wide campaign to promote energy efficiency. The enactment of the Energy Conservation Bill, 2000, which is now before Parliament, will enable Governments to designate energy-intensive consumers for the purpose of compulsory energy audit.

I would like to draw your attention to the important issue of maintaining grid discipline. As you are all aware, there was a major grid collapse in the Northern Region on January 2nd, resulting in a serious loss to the economy. Lack of grid discipline was the main cause for the grid collapse. I would like the Ministry of Power to improve its mechanism for grid management so that any such failure can be set right in a reasonable time.

Dear Chief Ministers, this gathering represents a broad spectrum of India's political diversity. You belong to different political parties. My own Government at the Centre is also a coalition of many parties, including several regional parties. All of us have pledged to work for rapid eradication of poverty and unemployment, so that all our citizens can enjoy decent living standards. This is our common commitment to the people who have given us their mandate.

Nevertheless, all of us are facing a common hurdle in fulfilling this commitment to the people. Although power is what powers a nation's economic progress, almost all parts of the country are facing power shortages—and the scarcity is acute in many places. Without adequate, affordable, and reliable power, neither agriculture nor industry and services can grow to their full potential. And without accelerated economic growth, we cannot make a faster and more visible dent in poverty and unemployment.

Therefore, we should begin our discussions today by accepting one stark truth. If we want to improve the power situation in the country, there is simply no alternative to a shared commitment of both the Centre and State Governments to power sector reforms. In this context, I am aware of the problems you face from the opposition parties in your respective States. Often, a party in the opposition in one State attacks the very reforms that its government is trying to implement in another State. I urge all political parties to set aside their differences and arrive at a consensus on this issue, since it will benefit both the nation and each of our States. A common approach adopted by this Conference will send a powerful message to all political parties to support power sector reforms in all the States.

With these initial remarks, I declare the Conference open and hope that we will all agree on a roadmap to rapid reforms in the power sector.

# III

# Defence and Internal Security

# Strengthen National Defence Mechanism

I AM HAPPY to be here with you on the 15th SPG Raising Day and to witness a highly interesting and informative presentation on VIP security. I extend my warm felicitations to all members of the Special Protection Group who have been awarded the President's Police Medal for distinguished service and the Indian Police Medal for meritorious service for their creditable performance.

Terrorism, especially state-sponsored terrorism, has been posing a serious challenge to democratic societies all over the world. It requires the urgent attention of the international community to devise effective measures to combat these inhuman acts, if democracies are to function according to their chosen path. We have been subjected to cross-border terrorism for a number of years and are facing serious challenges both in the field of internal security as well as guarding our borders. While the armed forces have been guarding the borders, the police and security agencies have been playing a highly effective role in ensuring the internal security of the country.

The priorities of my Government have been to strengthen our national defence mechanisms for ensuring the unity and integrity of the nation and bring in rapid economic growth with equitable distribution to improve the life of the weakest. This can be achieved only if there is peace and stability in the country. Defence forces, police and security agencies can contribute significantly in this direction by improving their professional standards and ensuring that the morale of the forces is kept high.

The SPG, which has been entrusted with the sensitive and difficult task of ensuring the security of the top leadership of

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Speech on the occasion of 15th SPG Raising Day, New Delhi, 7 April 2000

the country, is required to accomplish it with the active cooperation and assistance of the State and Central police forces. They are also required to closely interact and work with the foreign security agencies to ensure adequate arrangements for their protectees when they go abroad. This naturally demands a very high degree of professionalism, commitment, and dedication. I have been closely watching the functioning of the SPG and I commend their professional skills and dedication to duty. I especially compliment all of you for your hard work that ensured a smooth election campaign for me and all the other protectees.

I have been highlighting the need for VIP security system to be unobtrusive and interfere the least with the normal activities of the people. I am happy that the Ministry of Home Affairs and the security forces have taken certain positive measures in this direction. The list of protected persons needs to be reduced. The extensive deployment of forces can be avoided by stressing on the quality of security personnel rather than on their quantity. This is now being appreciated and suitable measures are being initiated in this direction. I do hope that these measures continue to improve the effectiveness of the VIP security system in the country.

I am aware that the security agencies have been functioning in a very difficult security environment, which is seriously affected by terrorism, insurgency, and the continuing activities of fundamentalist groups. I compliment all of them for their good work. The Government is conscious of the difficulties being faced by the security agencies and will do its best to look after their welfare and improve their working conditions. On the occasion of the SPG Raising Day, I announce a grant of Rs. 10 lakh to the SPG Family Welfare Fund for the benefit of the families of the SPG personnel.

Finally, I wish all the members of the SPG, and their families, every success in their endeavours.

# A Brave Contingent

SINCE DECEMBER 1999, the Indian contingent with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Sierra Leone has operated most bravely and effectively under extremely difficult conditions and the strict mandate handed over to them. Well over two months ago the RUF denied 222 members of the Indian contingent and 11 Military Observers, including one Indian, freedom of movement. The Government of India and the UN have since then made untiring efforts through all possible channels to make the RUF follow the path of reason and to allow the unhindered movement of our troops.

The RUF remained unrelenting to the very end. It was unfortunate that the RUF misinterpreted the efforts to resolve matters peacefully through discussion as a sign of hesitation on the part of our soldiers to face the RUF.

The country is proud of the fact that you all have displayed your immense fighting skills and prowess to take on adversary's challenge.

The Indian Armed Forces have once again done the country proud and, as always, won acclaim for India from the world at large.

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Message to the Indian contingent in Sierra Leone, New Delhi, 21 July 2000

# Terrorism Cannot Stop Peace Process

I VISITED PAHELGAM and Srinagar on Thursday (3.8.2000) to study the situation arising out of recent massacre in various places in Jammu and Kashmir and of pilgrims at Pahelgam. I am thankful to Smt. Sonia Gandhi, Shri Somnath Chatterjee, Shri Mulayam Singh Yadav, Shri Yerrannaidu and Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad for agreeing to join me at such short notice. My colleagues Shri George Fernandes, Ms. Mamata Bannerjee and Shri Chaman Lal Gupta also joined me along with the Chief of Army Staff. From Srinagar, the Governor and the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir accompanied us.

Our visit was also intended to assure the people of the State that the entire nation stood by them at this hour and to share their grief over the inhuman behaviour of the terrorists against innocent people belonging to the State as well as many from other parts of the country on pilgrimage to Amarnath.

The briefing which we were given by the Chief of Unified Command and security forces, made it clear that perpetrators of these heinous crimes were foreigners. Arms and ammunitions recovered from them clearly establish their links with Pakistan based Lashkar-e-Toiba.

Delegations of local population as well as pilgrims met me and spoke to me about the difficulties they were facing in the wake of the killings.

The House, I am sure, is one with me in assuring the people of Jammu and Kashmir and the nation that we will not yield before terrorism. I may add that while the fight against terrorism will be continued, India will not give up efforts for restoration of peace in Jammu and Kashmir.

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Statement in Parliament regarding massacre in Jammu & Kashmir, New Delhi, 4 August 2000

I made it clear at Srinagar that the dialogue with Hizbul Mujahideen is a part of this effort. Other groups who have chosen the path of violence should also realize that the people of Jammu and Kashmir want peace in the State. It is futile for them to continue on the path of violence. They should come forward for talks with the Government for redressal of their grievances.

# Defeat the Threat to Internal Security

WE HAVE GATHERED here today to discuss the prevailing internal security situation and possible ways and means of dealing with serious crime in its various manifestations.

Maintaining law and order is the constitutional responsibility of State Governments. But, internal security is no longer limited to mere maintenance of law and order. Since the decade of the 80s, the nature and definition of internal security have changed radically.

Somewhere around the early 80s, we were confronted by a challenge that, over the years, has assumed ominous proportion—the challenge of terrorism. Although it surfaced in one State, terrorism has spread its deadly tentacles to other States, assuming an all-India dimension.

The problem of terrorism that we face is engineered, fuelled and executed from across our border. Pakistan has adopted cross-border terrorism as an instrument of State policy to further its hostility towards India.

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Speech at the Conference of Chief Ministers on Internal Security, New Delhi, 5 August 2000

We also need to bear in mind that cross-border terrorism has been manifesting itself in various diabolical forms and insidious manner.

It ranges from indulging in carnages like the recent killings in Jammu and Kashmir which have left more than a hundred people dead, to using little known groups for disruptive activities like the bomb explosions in churches, to engineering serial bomb blasts like those in Mumbai and Coimbatore, to circulating fake currency notes, to encouraging underworld criminal activity to aiding and abetting insurgency in the North-Eastern States.

Therefore, it is imperative that challenges to internal security should no longer be seen as State-specific problems, but from a national perspective. The changed nature, magnitude and dimension of the threat to our internal security necessitates that both the Centre and the States pool their resources to formulate a national strategy and adopt effective tactics.

Hence, what is called for is a national effort whose success depends on cooperation among State Governments and between the Centre and the States.

Friends, I have mentioned Pakistan's role in fomenting terrorist violence. Through its various agencies and terrorists schooled in religious extremism, Pakistan has been waging a proxy war against India. Their aim is not confined to Jammu & Kashmir's separation from India; indeed, it is a sinister aim that targets India's unity and integrity.

This proxy war came to a head last year in the form of Pakistan's aggression in Kargil. Our forces successfully repulsed that aggression, but in their defeat, the propagators of terrorism have become increasingly desperate. There is an attempt to describe this cross-border terrorism as Jehad, but we reject this suggestion: the threat that we face today is nothing but state-sponsored terrorism by our neighbour.

It is a tribute to our open and democratic society's resilience and our tradition which rejects religious extremism, that social

peace has by and large remained unaffected by these disruptive activities. But this in no manner minimizes the reality of the threat we face today.

Hence there is neither scope for complacence nor reason to let down our guard. For, the long-term impact of terrorist and disruptive activities are far more worrisome than the immediate impact in the form of loss of lives and property. We should never lose sight of the fact that the ultimate goal of our neighbour is to harm our multi-religious, multi-lingual society and damage our tolerant social fabric.

If I were to list our weaknesses that have proved to be the strength of forces inimical to India's unity and integrity, our open society and democratic polity, they should be:

- Large stretches of porous border that are used for sending in terrorists, arms, drugs and infiltrators schooled in religious extremism;
- Inadequate police forces, both in terms of trained manpower and effective equipment which together severely restricts the functioning of primary law enforcement agencies;
- Insensitive civic administration that often leaves much to be desired in terms of fulfilling popular aspirations and addressing genuine grievances;
- A dilatory criminal justice system and inadequate legal framework.

We no doubt need to manage our borders in a far better manner. Towards this end, we should actively consider ways and means of effectively using the BSF for border management.

The key to effectively facing the threat of terrorism and organized crime, be it insurgency, extortion or extremist political violence, lies in revamping State police forces and upgrading their fighting abilities. We have seen how a highly motivated and committed police force was instrumental in restoring peace to Punjab. Highly trained and motivated criminals and terrorists have easy access to sophisticated weapons, communication

systems and related technology, not to mention funds, thanks to their benefactors. On the other hand, our poorly-trained State police forces have to make do with our out-dated and outmoded arms and communications equipment.

Our first task, therefore, should be to strengthen the police force in each State so that police personnel have the courage and capability to fight and defeat the forces of terror.

This is no doubt an uphill task. But it can be accomplished if the States pool their resources in creating modern training facilities, setting up an effective inter-state intelligence mechanism and state-of-the-art forensic laboratories.

The Home Minister has urged higher allocation of funds for modernization of police forces. We will raise it substantially from Rs 200 crore in the last financial year. I also call upon the State Governments to spend more on force modernization.

As with our police, our civil administration needs a total make-over. That is the only way to combat social alienation that results from lack of development and non-responsive governance. Alienation of the people, we must remember at all times, provides fertile ground for planting and nurturing disaffection.

I would now like to touch upon an area that requires early attention—our criminal justice system which over the decades has become rather cumbersome. This, in turn, results in delayed justice and a low rate of conviction. Trials in crimes committed to create large-scale disturbance or wage war against the state go on for years.

To correct the situation, we should consider adopting a comprehensive law: a law that provides for transparent and expeditious means to deal with crimes against the state, crimes which impinge on internal security and crimes to subvert national infrastructure.

In this context, I would like to refer to the proposed Prevention of Terrorism Bill. The Law Commission submitted the draft Bill after widest possible consultations and the draft

has been circulated among all States and Union Territories for their comments.

There are two points that I would urge you to bear in mind while considering the draft:

- The proposed law incorporates adequate safeguards to ensure there are no violations of human rights;
- India is the only country in the world that faces a serious problem of terrorism but does not have an effective anti-terrorism law to deal with the problem.

Simultaneously, we should tone up our investigative machinery through upgradation of skills and acquisition of state-of-the-art equipment. State Governments must also ensure better coordination between investigating and prosecuting agencies.

On its part, the Union Government is prepared to extend all possible help to State Governments in facing every threat to our internal security. We are actively considering augmenting the strength of Central forces and providing them with effective equipment.

We could even consider, with your concurrence, setting up a central agency that would have jurisdiction to fight crimes against the state. These would include acts of sedition, apart from hijacking, cyber crimes and circulation of fake currency.

A lasting solution to isolating, and eliminating, forces inimical to our national interest lies in adopting an imaginative political process. For, only a political initiative can end alienation of the people from the mainstream and strengthen our democratic polity.

Hence, our initiative for a dialogue with anybody who is willing to sit across the table and eschew violence in Jammu and Kashmir. This by no means undermines our determination to fight terrorism.

On the contrary, we will act with added resolve, particularly, in our effort to eliminate cross-border terrorism.

There shall be no let up in our determined fight against those who seek to harm India's unity and integrity. With the people on our side, we can and we shall defeat diabolical external forces in a decisive manner.

I would like to cite here our experience of talks with insurgents in Nagaland. The ceasefire holds in that State and we are hopeful of a resolution in the not too distant future.

For success in our endeavour to ensure that every citizen feels protected and secure, we have to work together as a team with a singular purpose.

I am confident of your collective cooperation and I assure you of the Union Government's assistance. I look forward to this conference coming up with concrete proposals and laying the foundation for similar interaction in future.

# Instil Confidence Among the People

I AM HAPPY to be with you today at the Annual Conference of DGPs and IGPs.

Over the years, this conference has emerged as an important forum for interaction among those who lead the various State police forces and Central Police Organizations. It offers a platform to discuss new challenges posed by the changing nature of crime and emerging forces of destabilization.

These challenges have acquired a menacing dimension in recent times. To overcome them, we need to evolve means and methods that will place the state at an advantage over criminals,

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Speech at the conference of DGPs and IGPs, New Delhi, 28 September 2000

both in terms of preventing crime as well as bringing the guilty to book.

The police form an important instrument of the state in any open and democratic society. One of the criteria that define a free society is safety and security of all citizens. Freedom from fear and insecurity is integral to building such a society.

The responsibility for ensuring freedom from fear and instilling confidence among the people rests, to a large extent, with the police. This responsibility is best fulfilled if the police personnel efficiently discharge their duties in accordance with the laws of the land.

Not only can we then ensure freedom from fear, but also rapid social and economic development. For, progress is best

*Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee presenting Police Medal for Distinguished Service at the Conference of DGPs and IGPs, New Delhi, 28 September 2000*

assured when there is rule of law and social stability.

I mention this because the collective desire of the people of India that their country should emerge as a prosperous and modern state faces a serious challenge. Hostile forces emanating from our neighbourhood have stepped up their subversive activities, seeking to undermine our democratic polity, damage our social fabric and disrupt our economic progress.

The internal security scenario, therefore, poses cause for serious concern.

Terrorist violence in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of India, engineered by protagonists of terror across the border, is an example of the challenges we face. We have seen no dilution in Pakistan's attempts to intensify its proxy war against India.

Indeed, Pakistan has stepped up its terror campaign in direct proportion to the mounting desire for peace among the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Everybody knows the manner in which Pakistan-backed terrorist organizations sabotaged the peace talks in Jammu and Kashmir.

The law and order situation in the North-East is also worrisome. Separatist and terrorist groups, apart from criminals bereft of ideology of any shade, continue to indulge in violence and extortion. This has adversely affected development schemes.

In these trying circumstances, the police forces, especially of Jammu and Kashmir, have been valiantly performing their duties. I compliment them for fearlessly combating terrorism and related crimes. On behalf of a grateful nation, I salute those men and officers who have made the supreme sacrifice.

Yet another challenge to our internal security is the scourge of Left extremism. Innocent people in several States continue to fall victim to these perpetrators of violence. We must deal with a firm hand Left extremist groups to drive home the message that there is no space for violence in a democratic polity.

In this context, I would urge the police of the States, for instance Andhra Pradesh, which have done well in tackling this menace, to share their experience with the police of other States. A joint effort can take us a long way in defeating political extremism that rests on violence.

This conference affords an excellent platform for sharing such views and experiences, thus making the conference a useful exercise.

I began by talking about new challenges to our society and the need for the police to evolve new means to overcome them. The impressive agenda for this conference lists many such issues of contemporary and future relevance.

For instance, you have rightly included "Policing in the Next Millennium" and "Technological advancement and its implications on crime" for detailed discussion and deliberation. The 21st century policeman is vastly different from the lathi-wielding law-enforcer of the 20th century.

This is as true for India as for the rest of the world. In the West, the proverbial 'Bobby' and the 'Copper' have made way for highly skilled, highly motivated and highly equipped policemen. There is no reason why we should lag behind.

India's police personnel in the new century have to be intelligent, disciplined, suave and adept in the use of modern technology. That is the only way to keep pace with the changing profile of crime, for example, cyber crime and cyber terrorism.

We have to take note of the emerging trends of criminal activity in the new century today so as to be prepared to face the challenges of tomorrow.

In this connection, I am happy that the CBI recently held a seminar on cyber crime. I am sure that this has helped sensitize officers of various State police forces about the menacing potential of this new crime.

But this by itself is not enough. We have to train a large number of specialist police officers to investigate and successfully bust cyber crime.

All this, of course, means providing the police with new skills and equipment. No doubt efforts are on to modernize police forces, but there are resource constraints that stand in the way. These can be partly overcome through improved training, better tactics and accurate intelligence.

Government is aware of the limitations of resources and trained manpower. The Union Home Minister is taking personal interest in seeing that these handicaps are removed as expeditiously as possible.

At the recent Conference of Chief Ministers on Internal Security, I had announced Government's decision to increase the allocation of funds for modernization of police forces from Rs. 200 crore to Rs. 1,000 crore per year. I had also called upon State Governments to come up with matching grants.

It is not enough to talk about modernizing police forces or upgrading the equipment at their disposal. Resources have to be mobilized, by the Union and the State Governments, to modernize the police by training and equipping them. This is a responsibility that has to be shared jointly: We have stepped forward; we now expect the State Governments to do so.

We must at all times remember that the nation's security is an indivisible, single entity. We cannot see it merely as being constructed by the law and order of individual States. It must be seen as securing the unity and integrity of our nation. Indeed, the very future of a billion people.

Today, we are dealing with organized crime that is often controlled from beyond our borders. We are dealing with criminals who are well equipped, highly focused and undeterred by consequences of their criminal deeds.

As the economy globalizes, so does crime, at an even faster rate. Sophisticated international crime syndicates mastermind a complex network of political and economic crimes, claiming innocent victims in the pursuit of their diabolical objectives.

Printing and circulation of fake currencies, narcotics smuggling and extortion rackets are only part of their stock in trade. In fact, narcotics trafficking and its more violent manifestation, narco-terrorism, have had a dangerous impact on our internal security. This conference should deliberate on ways and means of launching a more effective battle against narcotics smuggling and its concomitant evils.

To tackle the criminal networks with their trans-national tentacles, a new level of co-operative relationship has to be established between the police, intelligence agencies and the public.

Friends, internal security today is intrinsically linked to external security. The ramifications of the threats we face today are much deeper and wider than ever before. Hence, all agencies of the state, all wings of administration, civil and police, have to pool their resources in a combined fight against crime. The Centre and the States have to work in collaboration, in a spirit of co-operation.

A last point: A police force with an impeccable image and unimpeachable integrity acquires an effectiveness that no weapon or equipment can impart. I would urge you to ponder over what needs to be done to correct popular impressions about the police. These may not be entirely founded, but the fact that such impressions should exist, is by itself cause for concern.

Before I conclude, I would like to congratulate the recipients of the President's Police Medal for Distinguished Service. Through this award, the nation recognises your dedicated service under challenging circumstances.

This award also symbolizes the high value that Government attaches to the role played by the police and security agencies in maintaining the nation's internal security. Your selfless service will motivate and encourage all police personnel.

I am confident that under the able leadership of all of you attending this conference, India will be able to overcome challenges to her security and thus ensure freedom from fear for all her citizens.

# Ceasefire for a Peaceful Resolution

THE PEOPLE OF India are heartened by the steady improvement in the situation in Jammu & Kashmir. Our sisters and brothers in the State have always longed for the return of peace and normalcy, which is now happening steadily and perceptibly. The true complexion of the forces of terrorism and separatism, as also their growing isolation in the State, are now clearer than ever before. The entire world now knows who is misusing the name of Islam to prolong the agony of the people of Jammu & Kashmir.

India has always stood for a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue. Events of the past two years have further underscored India's credentials for peace. They have also once again proved, beyond a shadow of doubt, that India has both the resolve and capability to defeat any attempt to transgress India's security or challenge our national unity and integrity.

During my visit to Srinagar on August 3 this year, I had underscored the need for resolving all issues in the spirit of *insaniyat* (humanism). Mine was a sincere appeal for cooperation to bring to an end the long trail of violence, which has claimed so many precious lives and inflicted untold misery on all sections of the State's population-Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Sikhs alike.

We have continued our efforts to normalize the situation in the State and to hold talks with all those who are prepared for a dialogue. The holy month of Ramzan, during which Prophet Mohammed exhorted one and all to live in peace and harmony, is soon approaching. The Government has, therefore, instructed the security forces not to initiate combat operations

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Statement on the situation in Jammu & Kashmir, New Delhi, 19 November 2000

against militants in Jammu & Kashmir during this most pious month in the Islamic calendar. I hope that our gesture will be fully appreciated and all violence in the State and infiltration across the Line of Control and the international border will cease and peace prevail.

# A Fresh Peace Initiative

BEFORE THE WINTER Session of the Parliament concludes, and the House rises for the festival of Christmas, I wish to take this opportunity and share with all Hon'ble Members the Government's assessment of the situation in J&K, also along the LOC.

Following my announcement of 19 November, that during the holy month of Ramzan our security forces would not initiate operations against the militants, also expressing a hope that along the LOC, too, infiltration would cease, there have been some encouraging developments. Certain other aspects, however, remain as our continuing concerns.

The Government is greatly heartened by the response of the citizens, political parties and other organizations in the State of J&K. Our peace initiative has been widely welcomed there. A distinctly different and a more optimistic mood now prevails in that State. The constituency for peace has expanded significantly.

There has also been a decline in incidents of terrorist violence in that state. Activities, however, of organizations like Lashkar-e-Toiba and Harkat-ul-Mujahedin continue, resulting in most unfortunate and regrettable loss of innocent civilian

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Statement in both the Houses of Parliament regarding peace initiatives in J&K, New Delhi, 20 December 2000

lives, also of the personnel of our security forces. The Government remains firm in its resolve to combating these and other challenges, also to defeating their inhuman and nefarious designs.

There has been a recognizable decline, too, in attempts at cross-LOC and cross-IB infiltration of terrorists. This must cease entirely. The Government is committed to achieving this end.

Along the LOC, we have witnessed a marked improvement in incidents of exchange of fire. Relative peace has prevailed all along the LOC, ever since my announcement of 19 November, barring some incidents in the early stages.

After careful consideration of all aspects the Government has, therefore taken a decision to extend the period of "no initiation of combat operations" by another month. After Republic Day 2001, the Government will review the position again.

As the initiator of the dialogue process with Pakistan, India remains committed to it. The existence of a suitable environment for such a process is self evidently necessary. As part of our continued commitment to the Shimla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration, the Government will initiate such exploratory steps as are considered necessary by it, so that the Composite Dialogue Process between the Governments of India and Pakistan could be resumed.

Let me inform the House that the government's unwavering commitment to meeting the challenge of terrorism remains undiluted. Whereas we will continue to exercise maximum restraint in face of grave provocations, national interests will never be compromised.

I wish to assure Hon'ble Members that we remain steadfast in our commitment to restoring lasting peace and to enabling all our citizens from J&K to join as equal partners in India's march to prosperity.

# Condemn Terrorist Violence Unequivocally

THE RECENT SPURT in terrorist violence in Jammu & Kashmir and elsewhere in India, unleashed by Pakistan-based militant organizations has vitiated the atmosphere for resumption of talks between India and Pakistan. Terrorist attacks on our security forces and civilians have increased both in number and in their gravity. The incidents at the Red Fort and Srinagar Airport, combined with the threat to strike at the Prime Minister's Office, show that militant outfits, which are opposed to peace and normalcy in the State are alarmed at the prospects of fruitful dialogue between India and Pakistan.

What is particularly surprising and distressing is the fact that the leadership of Pakistan continues to do nothing to restrain these terrorist organizations, which operate from Pakistani soil, even as it professes its eagerness to resume talks with India. Its argument that violence will stop once talks begin is strange, to say the least. It convinces neither India nor the international community. There cannot be meaningful talks for resolving outstanding issues and normalizing bilateral relations when the guns of terrorist outfits continue to do their own talking.

India's readiness to have talks with Pakistan at any level, including at the highest level has been well established. We have also strongly demonstrated our sincerity to create a conducive atmosphere for talks through specific confidence-building measures, such as unilateral cessation of combat operations in Jammu & Kashmir. However, the continuation of terrorist activities in and outside the State shows that the purpose of our taking these unilateral initiatives is not being fulfilled.

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Statement on violence in Jammu & Kashmir, Udupi (Karnataka), 18 January 2001

I urge the leadership of Pakistan to demonstrate its sincerity and commitment to the dialogue process by unequivocally condemning terrorist violence by Pakistan-based militant groups and effectively checking their anti-India activities. The onus of creating a positive atmosphere for bilateral talks rests clearly with Pakistan.

# International Fleet Review—A Symbol of Global Co-operation

OVER THE PAST two days, we have had the pleasure of witnessing a rich variety of naval drills and displays from around the world. I would like to express my appreciation to the Navies of the 29 countries which participated in the exercises and contributed to the success of our first-ever International Fleet Review.

We have also seen a panoramic review of India's rich maritime history, with which perhaps many even in our own country are not well acquainted.

How many of us know that our ancient Vedic texts contain references to India's maritime activities? Or that the inspiring motto of the Indian Navy शं-नो-वरुण [may *Varun*—the Lord of the Seas—be auspicious for us]—is drawn from these texts?

Friends, here in Mumbai we are at the centre of the Indian Ocean in far more than just the geographical sense. The Indian peninsula overlooks the busy sea-lanes from the energy

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Address at the International City Parade, Mumbai, 18 February 2001

rich West Asian ports to the economic hubs of South East Asia and Japan. We share maritime borders with countries in our near and extended neighbourhood.

The Indian Navy, therefore, has an important role in co-operating with other Navies of the world:

- to protect commercial sea-lanes against piracy and other disruptions;
- to curb drug trafficking and gun running, which have become the handmaidens of international terrorism; and
- to protect depleting ocean resources and to preserve the marine ecology.

It is only when we have established institutional arrangements for such co-operation can we truly say that we have built bridges of friendship across the oceans. The International Fleet Review is an important first step in bringing navies together to start this endeavour.

In a wide arc from South Africa in the west to Australia in the east, the waters of the Indian Ocean wash the shores of countries that form the Indian Ocean Rim. It is significant that 15 of the 24 foreign ships at the International Fleet Review were from these countries. This demonstrates a widespread recognition of the enormous potential in the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Co-operation. I hope that the Association will rapidly move to realize the promise of mutually beneficial collaboration.

Friends, over the centuries, seas and oceans have been seen as separating, dividing or insulating countries and continents from one another. As globalization embraces us and communication technologies connect us, oceans should unite us in our endeavour for peaceful economic development. Let us start this process with the Indian Ocean.

# Peace Through Talks

AS HON'BLE MEMBERS would recollect, Rashtrapatiji during his address to the joint sitting of both the Houses of Parliament had given voice to the Government's approach to the whole question of Jammu & Kashmir. He had then, amongst other things, shared with the Hon'ble Members of Parliament that:

The Government is pursuing a multi-pronged strategy to bring peace and normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir. As part of this, it launched a major peace mission on November 19, 2000, by announcing a unilateral non-initiation of combat operations in the State during the holy month of Ramzan. This bold initiative was extended twice up to February 26, 2001. As anticipated, this was warmly welcomed by the people of Jammu & Kashmir, who are longing for an end to militancy and violence in their beautiful State. The international community has also given overwhelming support, because it sees in it yet another demonstration of India's sincere commitment to a peaceful and permanent solution to the Kashmir issue.

Rashtrapatiji had also then informed the Hon'ble Members that:

Militancy in Jammu & Kashmir is now increasingly confined to foreign mercenary groups. This has widened the scope for democratic activity in the State. The people of the State participated enthusiastically in the recent Panchayat elections. I reiterate the Government's readiness to have talks with every group in the State that abjures violence.

The Government has decided to pursue this path by initiating talks with various groups in J & K.

The Government has seriously addressed the question of continuing with the peace process and further extending the

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Statement in both the Houses of Parliament regarding Jammu & Kashmir, New Delhi, 22 February 2001

period of non-initiation of combat operation by our security forces. In this regard, the Government has benefited by the detailed briefing of and consultations with all political parties that it had on February 21, 2001.

Having examined all aspects of the question in its totality, the Government has decided to further extend the period up till the end of May. Let this opportunity not be missed by all those that desire peace, for our patience is not infinite.

I wish to make it abundantly clear that the peace process is only for those that wish to benefit from it. We will not let this process be derailed, diluted or misused. For such organizations or elements, as have vowed to disrupt the peace process, or intend to continue with violence and the killing of innocents in J & K, my message is unequivocal and clear. If you inflict injury on any Indian citizen in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, or elsewhere, or commit any act of violence or terrorism then the security forces have clear instructions to act decisively and to defeat such intentions. Law and order shall be maintained. Those who think that our security forces are less determined today to put an end to terrorism are only deluding themselves.

It is my hope that Pakistan will act, even now, and adjure violence, give up their continuous hostile propaganda against India, stop promoting and aiding cross-border terrorism, take the path of peace through bilateral talks as enshrined in the Shimla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration, thus creating a conducive atmosphere so that the comprehensive dialogue process can be resumed resulting in a lasting solution to the problems.

The process of peace is to enable our citizens in Jammu & Kashmir to live peacefully. It is their voice that has to be heard, not of the militants or foreign mercenaries.

Peace is our objective, to peace and dialogue we remain committed because that, above all, is what the people of Jammu & Kashmir need most.

# Military—A Model of Discipline

I AM PLEASED to be with you at this conference on the Role of Military in Democracies.

Throughout the history of civilizations, the will of the people has been regarded as the principal source of legitimacy for a good system of governance. The manner in which the will of the people expresses itself, and gets reflected in the form of governance, has of course changed from time to time. It has also changed according to the social and cultural variations of different nations.

Thus, the concept of democracy is basic to human society. The principle of popular rule has existed in some form or the other in all societies throughout history. For example, although India was ruled by many kingdoms in the past, the management of a range of affairs of a village or a community was conducted by Panchayats with a high degree of people's participation.

Democracy in modern times has evolved into a more developed and well-structured system of governance. The most distinctive aspect of this system is a government elected by the people periodically on the basis of universal adult franchise. And, it is this form of democratic governance, with significant systemic variations, which is widely accepted in the world today.

Similarly, the institution of military has also been a constant feature in the history of any nation. Its rightful role has always been to defend the nation against external aggression and to maintain internal peace and order at the time of abnormal social strife. It derives its legitimacy—indeed, its honour and prestige—from its role as the ultimate defender of a nation.

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Speech at the seminar on the Role of Military in Democracies, New Delhi, 17 March 2001

In many societies, especially those with great diversities, the military symbolizes national unity and integration. The men in uniform are also an example of how to put the nation's interests above personal and sectional interests. Besides, the military is also a model of discipline, which civilian organizations and the people at large are expected to emulate. Which is why the armed forces are regarded as representing the highest manifestation of patriotism and a nation's honour. A soldier's place in society is unique. He is held in high esteem by the citizenry. And when he has to lay down his life to guard the nation, his is not an ordinary death. It is extolled as martyrdom to be glorified, eulogized, and remembered with pride and gratitude.

The military is constitutionally required to accept the supremacy of a civilian authority. Its role is to defend, and not to govern. The military is neither expected nor oriented to intervene in politics. Because, in a mature democracy, people have a well-defined way of expressing their discontent against bad governance by voting out a set of people in power and voting in another set of their choice. They know that they need not turn to the military for effecting such change.

Defining the specific relationship between the armed forces and the civilian authority in this manner does not, in any way, belittle the importance of the military. Rather, it provides a protection to the military as an institution, whose integrity should not, in any way, be weakened by its stepping into the roles of other institutions of governance. Such constitutional provisions also protect the institution of the military from individual adventurism.

Experience has shown how the people have disfavoured, rejected, and when necessary, revolted whenever democratically elected governments are superseded by military regimes. The military is respected in a democracy. However, the military in a dictatorship is at best tolerated—and that too for a short period.

Because national security overrides all other considerations,

it is given a higher level of protection against external oversight to prevent interference in its functioning. Even the press, which normally plays the role of a watchdog on other institutions of a democracy, has to accept restrictions in covering military matters. Similarly, military decisions are not dragged into political controversies in a democracy.

Since Independence, the relationship between India's democratic polity and her Armed Forces has evolved on healthy lines. Our military has made a significant contribution to our efforts to build a strong and self-confident nation, proud of its open and pluralistic ethos, secular in outlook, and forward looking. The many formations of the Indian Armed Forces within themselves encompass our rich and diverse national ethos.

In India, as in all other modern democracies, the Armed Forces have come to occupy a prominent place in the popular imagination. The portrayal of the Armed Forces in cinema, theatre, literature, as well as their participation in sports and national celebrations give expression to the high standing that both the polity and civil society accord to our jawans.

India's Armed Forces have been regularly assisting civilian authorities in search and rescue, disaster relief, and such other assistance as is required in times of crises. Their shining role in leading the rescue and relief operations in Gujarat after the recent earthquake is well known to all. As a disciplined modern force, the Indian military approaches each of these missions with professional excellence and has developed and honed its skills over the decades.

Our armed forces maintain service-to-service relations with other democratic countries, which comprise exchange of visits, training, and other mutually beneficial fields of cooperation. These military-to-military relations are integral to India's diplomacy. The recent International Fleet Review in Mumbai lived up to its description as building "Bridges of Friendship"

The latter half of the 20th century has seen a wave of democratization throughout the world. I am confident that this

wave will embrace the remaining few countries in Asia or in other continents that have not yet become democracies. In the era of globalization, when nations are becoming increasingly inter-dependent, we need to also strengthen institutions of global democracy. We need to de-militarize conflicts so that these can be resolved through peaceful means.

Change is an inevitable process in any society. Just as all the institutions of a democracy are expected to respond to the rising expectations of the people, so too must the military. While keeping to their well-defined role, the armed forces need to constantly raise the standards of probity, transparency, and accountability. They should respond positively to the new issues of modern times, such as environmental protection, human rights, and greater participation by women. In all these matters, armed forces in democracies around the world can benefit a lot from each other's experiences.

In recent decades, terrorism has emerged as a global menace. It becomes deadlier when it is combined with religious extremism and receives cross-border support. Often, it is the medium through which proxy wars are waged. It is also a threat to democracy. Its suppression urgently requires new responses by both military and civilian institutions, along with international cooperation. India favors an early convening of a global conference on terrorism under the aegis of the United Nations.

With these words, I commend the organizers of this conference and extend my best wishes to all of you.

# IV
# Science and Technology

# Pioneering Work in Energy Research

IT HAS BEEN a pleasure to watch and hear about the state-of-the-art new facility set up by Tata Energy Research Institute at Gaul Pahari, Gurgaon.

Retreat, as this facility is known, is an example of sustainable habitats that alone can help us face the problem of increasing demand on resources. TERI has offered a solution through remarkable fusion of renewable natural resources and human intelligence.

Sustainable development will be the key to survival, success and prosperity, especially for developing countries, in the 21st century. Bearing this in mind, our Government is committed to making sustainable development the cornerstone of its development strategy.

Providing adequate quantities and diverse forms of energy is one of the challenges that we have to overcome in achieving sustainable development. There is .tremendous demand for energy—not only by our factories and farms, but also by our people to meet their cooking and lighting needs.

Some of the lasting images of the underdeveloped world are of women and children spending hours collecting firewood; of families living in darkness after the sun goes down; of factories coming to a grinding halt; and crops withering away in parched fields.

These images need to be wiped out forever from our country if we are to emerge as a developed nation. Sustainable development strategies that ensure long-term benefits for the masses can help us wipe out these images.

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Speech while inaugurating TERI's Training Complex through teleconferencing, New Delhi, 3 July 2000

These strategies should not only protect our environment, but, apart from other necessities, also fetch clean and efficient energy to the homes of all sections of our society. To achieve the goal, we must act now.

Clearly we need an integrated energy policy that aims at high levels of efficiency in the entire energy cycle, ensure equitable distribution and use, and protects our natural resources and the environment.

In this journey towards securing a sustainable energy future, technological innovation and change are the twin requirements. We have to harness renewable forms of energy on a large scale, so that we ensure secure and satisfactory supply for the present generation, as well as the generations to come.

More importantly, we have to reduce the burden on Mother Earth.

But harnessing energy, even if it is renewable, by itself is not enough. This has to be coupled with finding ways and means of using energy efficiently. Because, a unit of energy saved is more valuable than a unit produced.

Science and technology have to show the way to greater and more efficient use of energy, including renewable energy. Theories and concepts have to go beyond the lab and result in practical applications that can be easily adopted and disseminated.

It is against this background that TERI deserves to be congratulated for constructing a model of sustainable habitats.

I call upon architects, builders, town planners and others involved in housing and habitat to draw upon TERI's innovative skills, and thus incorporate environmental protection and sustainable energy policy that will cover all forms of supply and all means of consumption.

# A New Temple of "Knowledge Economy"

I AM VERY happy to be here on this historic day when Tamil Nadu takes a giant step forward on the path of progress. Tidel Park represents a tidal wave carrying India's IT prowess to all the shores in the global cyber space. I heartily congratulate the Government of Tamil Nadu for this mega—or shall we say—giga-achievement.

I have seen the IT parks in Bangalore and Hyderabad. I am told that similar parks have been set up, or are in the process of being set up, in Mumbai, Pune, Calcutta, Thiruvananthapuram, Delhi and Mohali. All these masterpieces of the New Economy are shining Symbols of New India, which we are collectively building.

In his poem *Bharat Desam,* Rashtrakavi Subramania Bharati wrote these inspiring lines:

*Bharat Desam enru peyar solluvar*

Speaking of what India would do after attaining freedom, the poet had said:

*We shall make weapons; We shall make paper*
*We shall put up industries; We shall establish great centres of learning*
*We'll do here what is being done in the industrialized world*
*And we shall achieve great things.*

Bharati could not have imagined the coming of information technology. But his poetic prediction is fully vindicated by projects like Tidel Park, which show that India will be second to none in the world in the 21st century.

The new century has ushered in the era of information, communication and biotechnology or, more broadly, the era of

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Speech while inaugurating the Tidel Park, Chennai, 4 July 2000

a knowledge-driven economy and society. This latest phase marks the most daring and dramatic advance in human achievement. Only last month, we saw two major scientific announcements. One was the discovery of water on Mars. And the other was the initial success in the Human Genome Project. Taken together, they indicate that the human race is set to record major achievements in the new century in both our outer space and the inner space.

In this march of scientific, technological, economic and all-round human development, India's place has to be at the front—not at the back or in the middle. This is our resolve. And we shall convert this resolve into reality with the help of confidence in ourselves, in our capabilities and in our resources.

India's prowess in IT—and especially in software development—is already recognized all over the world. This was initially due to the achievements of young Indian IT professionals and entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley. In recent years, numerous success stories have been written in India itself, including many in Tamil Nadu.

Recognizing IT to be one of the main drivers of our goal to achieve rapid economic development, the Government gave top billing to this sector in its policies and priorities. I am happy that the State Governments quickly shared the vision of the Centre to create Silicon Valley type facilities in our country so that we could together make India the preferred destination for world-class software development. The opening of Tidel Park is a testimony to this convergence of the perspective and pro-activism in New Delhi and in Chennai.

Friends, India has achieved much in IT in a short time. However, we must remember that we have a long way to go to realize our full potential. We need to consolidate our strengths and quickly overcome our weaknesses. We need systematic and simultaneous action on many fronts.

The most critical area of weakness is our telecommunication infrastructure. The Government has taken many initiatives in

this regard, beginning with a new Telecom Policy last year. We also put in place one of the most liberal Internet policies anywhere in the world. The fruits of this policy are there for all to see. Internet services are spreading fast all over the country. And access costs are falling dramatically. However, I recognize that many issues still need to be sorted out if India has to quickly reach global levels of telecom and Internet usage.

The Group on Telecom and IT Convergence, under the chairmanship of Finance Minister Shri Yashwant Sinha, has begun to address these issues squarely. As you are aware, a new TRAI has been created. The Group is preparing the draft of a new Convergence legislation. National Long Distance Telecom Services will soon be opened up to foster large-scale competition. Similarly, opening up of International Long Distance Telecom Services is also under serious consideration.

For quite some time now, the IT and Internet industry have been demanding demonopolization of under-sea optical fibre connectivity. The Government will address this demand sympathetically. The lack of high-speed broadband connectivity has been a major bottleneck in the growth of India's IT sector. Recognizing this critical need, the Government has constituted a Standing Committee on Bandwidth. It will include representatives from the user industry as well as service producers. In view of the growing demand for Software Technology Parks in different parts of the country, the Department of Telecom Services is drawing up a plan to set up STPs jointly with concerned State Government agencies.

The Government has already decided to corporatize the Department of Telecom Services before October this year. I am sure that the combined effect of these multiple initiatives will soon give India a world-class telecom infrastructure and bring down prices to global levels. Chief Minister Thiru Karunanidhi has repeatedly asked for improved telecom services in Chennai and in the rest of Tamil Nadu. I assure him that the speedy corporatization of DTS will fulfil the needs of the people and the industry of this State, as also of the rest of India.

The second area that needs our immediate attention is IT and IT-enabled education. We have set an ambitious, but fully achievable target of US $ 50 billion of software exports by 2008. This can create over two million highly-paid jobs. In addition, the domestic IT market will also generate a big demand for trained manpower. For this, we need to vastly increase facilities for IT and IT-enabled education. Many urgent reforms are needed in infrastructure, accreditation, teacher training, and education loans for students. I would like the Centre, the State Governments, and educational institutions to quickly address the imperative of educational reforms.

The third area that needs our urgent attention is the development of IT for the revival and modernization of our traditional industries. The bulk of software development in India is targeted for exports. Disturbingly, our domestic economy is absorbing very little of it so far. This imbalance is hurtful to the long-term sustainability of our potential in IT. Let us not forget that India's national goals can be achieved only by a balance between the "Brick Economy" and the "Click Economy". We need the new economy to create new efficiencies and higher productivities in the traditional economy. Similarly, we need the revival of the traditional economy to create a growing and vibrant domestic market for the new economy.

A specific initiative that can drive the domestic market for IT is the rapid and widespread use of IT in Government departments, utilities, banks, and other PSUs. Now that the IT Bill has been enacted, enabling secure e-commerce transactions, I would like to see all bulk procurement to soon take place on the Internet. This will promote transparency, efficiency, and accountability. It will also lead to considerable savings for the Government.

The fourth area demanding our urgent attention is the development of IT applications in Indian languages. Each of our languages is a vast repository of traditional knowledge and values. For instance, Tamil is one of the oldest and richest languages in the world. Indian languages are also the main

carriers of our social and cultural traditions from generation to generation. We must recognize therefore, that India will not benefit fully from today's IT-driven Knowledge Revolution, if English remains the only carrier of this knowledge.

I am happy to note that the Tamil Nadu Government has done more than perhaps any other state to promote IT in its native language. I would like all the states to emulate the example of Tamil Nadu to re-create their literary, cultural, and artistic heritage in digital form in their respective languages.

I must confess here that I often worry about a disturbing new divide appearing in Indian society—between the IT haves and have-nots. It is called the "Digital Divide". If we do not recognize it and take speedy corrective measures, it threatens to deepen the many existing social and economic iniquities in our society. Information Technology can not only be for the urban, English-speaking elite. It must become—and it can become—a powerful instrument for economic advancement, social justice, and empowerment of the dalits, tribals, backward castes and classes, and the rural poor. I would like to see, within the next five to ten years, the Internet and related technologies and services to touch the lives of every Indian, irrespective of where they live and what they do.

Towards this end, I urge scientists, professionals, and entrepreneurs to create useful, affordable, and widely-available IT services that would benefit our farmers, artisans, small traders, and other ordinary people. There is an urgent need to generate useful educational, commercial, and other types of content on the Internet in Indian languages. As an example, I would like to see information kiosks to become as common across the country as STD booths, where ordinary people can access e-mail in Indian languages and also receive useful information about programmes, schemes, and facilities made available by the Government, banks, and other institutions.

Friends, I am highly impressed by Tamil Nadu's rapid progress in agriculture, industry, education, healthcare and other social sectors. I see here a new mindset, a new attitude

and a new urge to move faster. The Centre is willing to assist the State in every possible way in this endeavour. I am aware of the long-standing demand of the people of Tamil Nadu for the Sethusamudram Canal Project. We have made a commitment to undertake it in the common manifesto of the NDA. I promise to the people of this State that our Government will soon begin work to fulfil this commitment.

Before I conclude, I congratulate the TIDCO and ELCOT for collaborating to create this shining new temple of the Knowledge Economy. As we all know, Tamil Nadu is famous for its magnificent temples. Tidel Park, if I may say so, is a worthy addition to them. Moreover, being a product of the Knowledge Economy, it is a confluence of both Saraswati and Lakshmi. I am sure that both Goddesses will shower their blessings on those who have worked hard to build it, and also, on all those who will work in its premises to create wealth for themselves, for Tamil Nadu, and for India.

# IT—The Principal Engine of Rapid Growth

I AM HAPPY to be here with all of you at this first Conference of Ministers of Information Technology.

Looking at the participants, however, I wonder whether it is a conference of Ministers or of Chief Ministers. The fact that over a dozen Chief Ministers have chosen to attend this Conference themselves shows three things:

First, that India has come of age and embraced Information Technology as the principal engine of rapid growth.

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Speech while inaugurating the first Conference of Ministers of Information Technology, New Delhi, 15 July 2000

Second, the Centre has accorded a very high priority to this sector by not only taking many bold and far-reaching policy initiatives, but also actively involving the State Governments in the implementation of these initiatives.

Third, the State Governments have in a very short time, responded enthusiastically to the opportunities offered by IT. Sometimes, State Governments seem to be in an even greater hurry to achieve results than the Centre.

There is also an intense and healthy competition among the States to outperform each other in IT. When I inaugurated the software technology park in Bangalore, in November 1998, I had commended this spirit of competition and said: "Let a Hundred Bangalores Bloom". Today, in less than two years, we have seen scores of software development centres coming up all across the country. At the same time, I must also express my concern over the growing gap between IT-forward and IT-backward States. We must work together to reduce this gap.

The conference is a striking illustration of the convergence of the priorities of the Centre and the States. Commitment to the development of Information Technology is today no longer limited to any particular party. It has transcended even ideological barriers. I only wish that all of us could develop a similar enthusiasm and determination to achieve speedy results in other areas of economic and social development.

Therefore, IT is more than a technology. It is the name of the greatest opportunity that history has placed before our nation to achieve India's all-round renewal. It teaches us what we as a nation can achieve if all of us work unitedly.

Today, even developed nations have come to recognize India as a software superpower in the making. The shining successes of our IT professionals and entrepreneurs, both abroad and also here in India, are a testimony to our potential in this sector. Apart from the tangible benefits in terms of our soaring software exports, these successes have also brought us many intangible gains. They have brought about a sea change in the global image of India and Indians.

All this, friends, is just the beginning. The best of India is yet to come. And, it is our collective responsibility to ensure that it comes soon.

Recognizing that there is no place for a rigid departmental mindset in this sunrise sector, the Union Government has always promoted an inter-ministerial approach. I would like this approach to be further strengthened with complete co-operation and regular consultation between all the concerned ministries, departments, regulatory bodies, industry associations, and consumer organizations. The IT industry must view the Government as a friend and a facilitator, and we must view the industry as a valued partner in realizing our goals.

I would especially like the speed of decision-making to be increased by removing bureaucratic outlooks and hurdles. If IT has forced business to conduct their operations at Internet speed, we in Government cannot afford to continue working in the same old style and at the same old speed.

From the agenda papers for today's conference, I can see that all the relevant aspects of the future growth of IT in India are included for discussion. I would like to briefly deal with what the Centre and the State Governments should together do in three critical areas of IT in India.

1) Telecom Infrastructure: India must quickly build a world-class telecom infrastructure, without which we cannot become, a world leader in IT. All of us recognize that our country has achieved considerable progress in this regard. However, I have received both written and oral representations from many of you, as also from many IT entrepreneurs from India and abroad, voicing serious concern at the slow pace at which some of our telecom reforms are moving.

The Government will speedily remove the bottlenecks that are slowing the development of India's telecom infrastructure. The high-level Group on Telecom and IT Convergence, under the chairmanship of Finance Minister Shri

Yashwant Sinha, is in the process of finalizing many far-reaching recommendations. These will be implemented soon.

Specially, the Government will implement one of the key components of the New Telecom Policy by opening up the National Long Distance Operations to the private sector before August 15. Recognizing the benefits of large-scale competition, the Government has decided to fully deregulate NLDO, with no artificial restriction on the number of licenses to be issued. This will be subject to the licensees paying a stipulated entry fee and a share of their revenues. The country has already witnessed the gains of such a liberal licensing policy in the recent rapid proliferation of ISPs, and the sharply falling Internet tariffs for the consumer.

Constraints of capacity in international data communication have already hampered the growth of Internet services in the country. The Government has already announced liberalization of the framework for setting up satellite gateways. All applications in this regard will be processed quickly. However, since this in not an adequate answer to the problem, I would like to see the early demonopolization of undersea optical fibre connectivity. Towards this end, private ISPs will be allowed, either singly or jointly, to set up their own landing stations anywhere in India in collaboration with international undersea bandwidth carriers. In addition, VSNL will be asked to make necessary changes without any delay in the exclusive arrangement with its partner, so that the existing bandwidth available to India is fully utilized.

2) Education Infrastructure: Expanding and modernizing India's education infrastructure is central to our IT strategy. The domestic and foreign demand for well-trained Indian IT professionals is increasing rapidly. According to one estimate, this sector will create over two million new jobs by the end of this decade. This demand cannot be met without vastly increasing educational facilities. We also need to improve teaching of non-IT subjects by using computers and the Internet for all students. Conventional methods of education,

certification, accreditation, and financing simply cannot help us to achieve such big leaps in quality and quantity. Wherever possible, educational institutions in the formal sector should join hands with those in the private sector in mutually beneficial ways.

At the same time, we must make conscious efforts to ensure that good quality IT education does not remain a preserve of the rich and the English-educated. We must also make it available to students from poor and rural families, and especially to those from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and OBCs.

The Government will soon set up a Task Force for preparing a long-term strategy for human resource development in IT. It will comprise the ministers for HRD, IT, and Finance. In view of the urgency of the problem, the Task Force will draw up a plan to optimally use the existing infrastructure of the IITs, RECs, other engineering colleges and educational institutions to double their student intake from the next academic year and triple it in the next two years.

3) IT for the Masses: The third area I wish to dwell upon is IT for the masses. No technology is an end in itself. What we do with that technology is far more important than the technology itself. If this was true about previous conventional technology, it is a hundred times truer for Information Technology.

I am somewhat concerned about the elitist nature of the present development of IT in India. Let us never for a moment forget that IT, in the Indian context, cannot be barometer for reading the rising wealth of a small set of individuals. It must become an instrument for creating new wealth and prosperity for the nation combined with distributive justice. It must—and it can—help us in achieving our broad national objectives of eradication of poverty, removal of regional imbalances, and promotion of social justice and gender justice.

What we need is a comprehensive Action Plan to promote IT for the masses in a big and visible way. We should select some projects that have a nation wide impact such as:

- a massive programme for rural phone connectivity;
- greater penetration of IT in traditional industries and agriculture;
- increased use of IT in governance;
- time-bound computerization and networking of banks;
- computerization of land records and judicial records;
- enabling all the commercial establishments, including, small and medium ones, to conduct e-commerce;
- for despatch, use of e-mail services in Indian languages; and
- making all the civic and transportation utilities citizen-friendly with the use of IT.

I would like this Conference to come up with specific and practical suggestions to implement this multi-pronged strategy.

With these remarks, I inaugurate this conference and wish it all success.

# Create a Stronger Scientific Temper in Society

IT GIVES ME great pleasure to participate in this important annual event of Indian Science Congress and be in the midst of a distinguished assembly of scientists. I convey my best wishes to all of you for the New Year that has just begun.

Of the many forces that will shape human history in the new millennium, science and technology will perhaps be the

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Speech while inaugurating the 88th Session of Indian Science Congress, New Delhi, 3 January 2001

most potent. We know how science and technology have changed the complexion of the world in the last couple of centuries of the last millennium. But this is just the beginning of a long and exciting voyage. All the discoveries of science and all the inventions of technology so far amount to the arrival of just a couple of stars in a sky of countless stars that are yet to appear.

How true was Newton when he confessed, in spite of all his epochal discoveries, that he felt like a boy on the seashore who found just a pebble or a shell, whilst the great ocean of knowledge lay all undiscovered before him.

The sky of science belongs to the entire mankind. No part of it can be a monopoly of any single nation. That is how is should be. If science has the power to benefit man, then that power should be accessible to men all over the world. Nevertheless, every nation on this planet—and certainly a big

*Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee speaking at the 88th Session of Indian Science Congress, New Delhi, 3 January 2001*

and ancient nation like ours—is required to ask itself: "How many stars in the sky of science have we caused to appear? How much have we contributed to the advance of scientific knowledge and to the betterment of life? And what plans have we drawn up for its progress in the future?"

Today we pay our tributes to all the visionaries of the past century who built a strong edifice of science and technology in India. We should pledge to not only strengthen the institutional base that they have created, but also to further expand it to make India a front-ranking scientific power in the new century.

Since the theme of your session is "Food, Nutrition & Environmental Security", I cannot but remember with deepest gratitude and admiration the name of my friend, Bharat Ratna C. Subramaniam, who passed away recently. He, along with Dr. M.S. Swaminathan—who is in our midst today—was the principal architect of the Green Revolution, which ensured India's self-reliance in food production. Subramaniam retained his interest in new developments in science and technology until the very end of his long life and used to regularly give me useful suggestions. India needs many more such top-class administrators with a multi-dimensional vision.

The theme of your session this year is most appropriate for it simultaneously impacts on many of India's critical developmental priorities. I compliment our hard-working kisans for steadily increasing the country's food production. Today we are facing a shortage not of food, but of facilities to store food. If India was able to withstand economic sanctions following Pokhran-II, a major part of the credit must go to our talented scientists, including our agriculture scientists.

Having achieved food sufficiency, our aim now is to achieve food security for all our citizens. The percentage of our population living below the poverty line has come down, and we have overcome starvation. Our objective now is to overcome malnutrition. The new century will be the Century of Knowledge and the Century of Mind. However, if the brain

does not develop properly in nearly one-third of our children who are undernourished, how will we be able to create those young minds that are essential to build India of our dreams in the 21st century? More than 50 percent of the pregnant women and children are anaemic. Vitamin and protein deficiencies are rampant. These realities overshadow our achievements and burden our national conscience.

At another level, the increases in food production that we have achieved in the past 3-4 decades have come at a cost to the agricultural environment. There has been both qualitative and quantitative degradation of land, water, and bio-resources. I have seen fertile lands that have become uncultivable due to waterlogging and salinization. I have seen areas where yields have come down because of wrong cropping pattern and faulty usage of fertilizers. I have also seen how excessive pumping of water has caused such acute depletion of water table that even drinking water has become scarce.

Environmental security is, therefore, no longer peripheral to the issues of food and nutritional security. Neglecting it yesterday has proved costly today; and could prove far costlier tomorrow. We must, therefore, step up our programmes on soil and water management, renewable energy sources, forest management, containment of chemicals and other pollutants, waste management, and conservation of bio-diversity for sustainability of Indian agriculture.

I urge the participating scientists to come up with comprehensive and useful recommendations to deal effectively with all the issues relating to food, nutrition, and environmental security, Accomplishing this task requires massive efforts in many areas that range from increasing crop yields to improving rural infrastructure; preventing huge wastage and losses that now characterize our food economy.

The government has taken some steps in this direction. The ambitious national rural roads project, which aims at providing all-weather road connectivity to over one lakh unconnected villages in the country in the next seven years,

is one of them. Another recent initiative in food security is the Antyodaya Anna Yojana, under which wheat and rice will be provided at Rs. 2 and Rs. 3 per kg respectively to one crore poorest of the poor families.

The Government has unveiled a National Storage Policy under which private sector investment is encouraged for the construction of modern silos at 20 locations to take care of buffer stocks. We shall soon initiate steps to restructure the Food Corporation of India in order to reduce costs and introduce greater efficiencies in the procurement, storage, and distribution of foodgrains. I recognize, however, that many more steps are necessary to resolve the long-neglected problems at all points in the food chain. Towards this end, the Government has recently set up a high-level inter-ministerial Group on the Food Economy to unlock its huge potential to create employment, generate wealth at the grassroots and boost our agricultural exports. The group, which is headed by the Finance Minister, will consult experts from various fields.

The task of ensuring food, nutrition, and environmental security in a vast country like India is gigantic. And not all solutions to the problem lie in science and technology, although your contribution will certainly be invaluable. What is needed is a collective and coordinated action among all those who are associated with our agriculture and the rest of the food economy. We know that Mother Nature yields the best crop only when all the necessary conditions are properly fulfilled. Similarly, kisans and rural credit institutions, Agriculture Universities and Krishi Vigyan Kendras, meteorological offices and marketing cooperatives—all have to work in perfect concert for us to achieve best results in the task before us.

In this endeavor, we will have to fully mobilize the vast pool of our people's traditional wisdom and knowledge, just as we have to employ new frontiers of scientific knowledge such as information technology, bio-technology, space science, nuclear science and genetic engineering. We should not be afraid to experiment with bold ideas. Green Revolution, for

example, would not have been successful if our scientists had yielded to the resistance they faced. We are now entering the era of what is called "precision agriculture", which is knowledge-intensive and uses the latest that science has to offer. India should take the lead in this.

We also have to close the vast distance that still separates the scientist from the kisan. Despite some commendable efforts of the Indian Council of Agriculture Research, "Lab to Land" has still largely remained a nice-sounding slogan. I think that it needs to be supplemented with the reverse initiative of "Land to Lab".

For instance, I often wonder why there are so few facilities even for our most progressive farmers, who otherwise might have very little exposure to the formal educational system, to improve their theoretical and practical knowledge. If business executives and professionals can have short-term retraining courses specially designed for them, why not for our knowledge-hungry farmers? Lack of formalized agricultural education to practising farmers is, in my view, the weakest link in our farm strategy. There seems to be a well-entrenched misconception that a farmer needs no formal education in farm management. We must rectify this lacuna urgently to enrich the human resource in Indian agriculture.

Distinguished scientists, let me now turn to some other critical issues before Indian science. During the last Science Congress Session in Pune, I had pledged that the Government would hike investments in R&D from the present level to 2% of GDP over the next five years. We have taken some specific steps in this direction, and many more will follow. The Finance Minister has earmarked Rs. 50 crores for the India Millennium Missions to be executed by Technology Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC) and an additional Rs. 50 crores for the New Millennium Technology Leadership Initiatives by CSIR. The message of these initiatives is clear and simple: India should be ahead of, and not lag behind, other nations in at least some areas of technology in the 21st century.

The challenges and opportunities of global competition in the emerging knowledge economy have placed a major task before the nation. It is the creation of a vast army of top-class professionals in science and technology, especially in information technology and bio-technology, to meet the demands of both the domestic and international markets. However, the ever-increasing demand for the Indian software professionals in India and abroad, along with the opening up of new career opportunities, has resulted in a lack of enthusiasm among young students for higher studies in science and careers in scientific research. Such a trend, if not arrested at this stage, may result in serious shortages of good quality teachers and research scientists.

To bridge this gap between demand and supply, the Government is seriously considering setting up a National Mission for Technology Education. It will aim to ramp up, on a crash basis, the facilities, at IITs, RECs and other premier science and engineering colleges. It will also seek to bridge the gap between academia and industry on the one hand, and between teaching and research institutions on the other. To realize these objectives, we will take necessary measures to radically reform the governance structures of our higher education institutions and encourage the flow of philanthropic funds from alumni and the Indian diaspora abroad.

In this context, I would like to make a special mention of the proposal by a group of highly successful Indian IT entrepreneurs in the United States to set up Global Institutes of Science and Technology. The Government will actively facilitate this and other such initiatives.

Removing the controls of bureaucrats is one of the pressing reforms needed to improve the governance structure of our research and higher education institutions. For Indian science to flourish, the administration and government officials should serve as facilitators of science and not as masters of scientists. I have said this before, but I feel it bears reiteration.

We need bold and unconventional initiatives also to seize

the big new opportunities arising on the horizon. One of them is the information generated by the Human Genome Project in the open domain. It is now available to Indian scientists. Once the 'base' is established, it is the knowledge of 'variation' over the base that matters. India's vast human genetic diversity provides that knowledge, like no other country does. India already has a superb IT manpower and also people trained in biosciences. Thus, 'bio-informatics' is the next wave in which India should be in the vanguard. India caught up with the 'Silicon Valley' phenomenon rather late. Can we not create the new 'Genomic Valleys' of the twenty-first century?

I understand that these initiatives need huge investments, which cannot come from the traditional budgetary route alone. But, the funding needs of Indian science can be adequately met by promoting an innovative public-private partnership. I am happy to note that the physical and intellectual infrastructure developed by the government at long last is being tapped by the Indian private sector to take a global lead. Indian businesses are beginning to respond to the opportunities in knowledge industry, rather than being oblivious to global S&T developments as in the past.

Distinguished scientists, our goal to make India a leading scientific nation in the world in the new century hinges critically on how successfully we take science to the people and create a stronger scientific temper in our society. I appreciatively recall that last year's session at Pune turned out to not just 'Science Congress' but a 'People's Science Congress'. The 'Children's Science Congress', which was held simultaneously, was also a novel initiative. I am happy that this initiative has been taken forward by mobilizing kisans in large numbers in this session of the Indian Science Congress. I am sure that this trend will be further strengthened in the future.

With these words, I am happy to announce the formal inauguration of the 88th Session of the Indian Science Congress.

# Bolstering India's Prowess in Information Technology

MY COMING TO Karnataka this time has turned out to be rather special. It seems to me to be more of a pilgrimage than a normal visit. Yesterday I was at Udupi to meet the Swamiji of Pejawar Math and to participate in the inauguration of a magnificent, newly built hall at the famous Krishna temple there. This morning I went to seek the blessings of the Swamiji of Adi Chunchanagiri Math and was amazed by the sheer range and magnitude of the social work that he is doing.

Later in the afternoon, I am going to see the new hospital built with the blessings of Sathya Sai Baba. It is not an ordinary hospital, but truly a grand Temple of Healing.

It seems to me that coming to Infosys City is also like coming to a temple—but a temple of a different kind. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, our first Prime Minister, had called factories and dams "Temples of Modern India", thereby underscoring their importance in nation-building. In today's New Economy, I think that the new temples of modern India are our information technology parks and the campuses of software companies like Infosys.

I see here a happy confluence of Saraswati, Laxmi, and Shakti. The New Economy is driven by knowledge. It is a producer of wealth and prosperity. So much so, that Laxmi seems to have a soft corner for software companies. However, beyond being a miracle of the mind and the market, information technology is also a source of great strength for our nation.

As you all know, soon after assuming office in March 1998, our Government took two major initiatives to make India a

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Speech at the Infosys City, Bangalore, 19 January 2001

strong and self-confident nation. One was "Operation Shakti" at Pokhran. The other was "Operation IT", piloted by a National Task Force in which Shri Narayan Murthy was also a member. Both these initiatives have succeeded beyond our expectations. Nobody can deny that these have significantly bolstered India's prowess—one has given us military Shakti and the other has given us economic Shakti.

As an important contributor to India's success in IT, Infosys deserves the country's acclaim. Shri Narayan Murthy, I am proud of you and your team.

Friends, I must confess that I know very little about software and hardware and other terms in the IT language. When I first heard about a mouse as an attachment to a computer, I wondered how people can handle a creature so unfriendly to the human hand.

But what I do know is that information technology has brought twin boons to our country. It has brightened India's image in the world as a software superpower in the making. At the same time, it has also given us a powerful developmental tool a banish poverty and backwardness, to make India a land of opportunities for all.

There was a time when Indian engineers and professionals had to wait for months to get a visa to go abroad, with anxiety and uncertainty. Today, the very same countries, and several new ones too, are competing with each other to attract Indian talent in IT. The previous misconceptions about India being a land of snake charmers are now a matter of the past. Today, if anybody charms the world it is our young and bright IT professionals who have made India's name synonymous with excellence in software.

When I go abroad, or when foreign dignitaries visit New Delhi, almost the first area in which they seek cooperation with India, is information technology. I must add here that, previously, foreign dignitaries were never satisfied without a

visit to the Taj Mahal. Now, even though that medieval wonder in Agra continues to be on their travel plans, they are not satisfied without visiting a wonder of modern India—namely, the IT centres in Bangalore.

I am told that not a week passes by without some important visitor from abroad coming to see Infosys City. I wonder how Shri Narayan Murthy and his colleagues both serve as impressive hosts to these pilgrims and yet continue to produce world class software.

Friends, three things impress me most about the IT phenomenon in India.

First, the shining successes of Indian IT professionals, both in India and those working in the United States and elsewhere in the world, have unleashed a tremendous energy among our young people. Most of these success stories are scripted by first generation entrepreneurs, who were not born in the families of lakhpatis and crorepatis.

This has convinced more and more young Indians that, with good education and hard work, they too can make it big. I see a hunger for computer education and good Internet services even in small towns and villages. The release of this aspirational energy among millions of young Indians fills me with great hope and confidence in India's future.

Second, companies like Infosys and several others in Bangalore and in other Indian cities have proved that it is possible to create success stories while working in India. Given world-class facilities, infrastructure, and management, Indian companies can indeed replicate the magic of Silicon Valley in India.

I recognize that both Central and State Governments have a major responsibility to improve the infrastructure available to Indian business in general, and to the IT industry in particular. We have taken several policy measures to promote telecom,

Internet and software development for both domestic and export markets. I recognize, however, that many more initiatives are urgently needed to capture the huge opportunity before India. I assure you that these initiatives will be taken soon.

For example, the beginning of work on the new international airport in Bangalore is a part of our commitment to facilitate the booming IT industry in and around this city. Similarly, to expand and enrich our educational infrastructure, we shall soon set up a National Mission for Technology Education. The Government is determined to take necessary steps to dramatically increase the number of highly trained professions in IT and other areas of engineering and management.

Lastly, success stories like Infosys have shown the power of collective effort driven by strong leadership. Although the media tends to highlight individuals—and I have no doubt that individual leadership is critical for success in any venture—we should not lose sight of the fact that triumph can only be sustained through teamwork.

Friends, there is yet another thing that has particularly pleased me about the new generation of IT entrepreneurs. It is the combination of a culture of professional excellence with an ethos of philanthropy. I have heard a lot about the generous initiatives of your Foundation to support education, healthcare, and community welfare. I commend this culture of giving to all other Indian businesses. It is in the best tradition of what the *Isa Upanishad* has taught us: "*Tena tyaktena bhunjithaha*", which means create wealth by ethical means and enjoy it by giving.

I particularly applaud the generous donations that members of your top management have made to IITs, IIMs, and other premier institutions. Quality education is the key that unlocks the huge potential hidden in the Knowledge Economy. So far, our institutions of higher learning have been able to cater to

a rather small section of our society, even though both the demand and scope for highly trained Indian professionals are growing by leaps and bounds.

The Government's resources are too insufficient to support any effort to achieve a massive quantitative and qualitative improvement in education. Therefore, business houses and wealthy individuals must come forward to participate in this urgent national endeavour. I must add here that this is no longer only a matter of voluntary choice. It is an inescapable social obligation.

In the era of economic reforms, the Government has rightly decided to move away from those areas where private enterprise and non-governmental initiatives can yield the best results. However, this places a major responsibility on the business community to contribute to the fulfilment of the growing expectations of our growing population. If the business community fails to rise to the occasion, the social support to our economic reforms will get weakened with an unpredictable backlash in the future.

Before I conclude, I have a word of advice to all the IT professional and entrepreneurs in India. Do not rest on your laurels. You have achieved much, but there is enormously more to achieve. Work harder and better to create products and brands that will rule the world. Know that creating wealth for yourselves and for your company will be a natural byproduct of your devoted efforts. Your goal, however, should be to contribute the most to creating wealth for one billion Indians, so that poverty and underdevelopment soon become a thing of the past in the new century. That is my vision, and I am sure that it is also the vision of all of you present here.

Once again, my felicitations and best wishes to Infosys.

# Need for Greater Technological Co-operation

IT GIVES ME great pleasure to be with you at the Asia Society's 12th Annual Corporate Conference. The Asia Society derives its prestige from its record of regularly bringing together the best minds from around the world for a stimulating exchange of views on issues of great relevance to Asia and the rest of the international community.

I congratulate the organizers for both the theme of this conference and for choosing India to organize it in. It is difficult to talk about the future of technology, when we can barely keep track of its present developments. Technology is changing the social landscape so rapidly, that some weak-hearted persons fall back on Mark Twain's humorous dictum: "I am all for progress; but it is change that I object to."

Friends, it is not often that we come across a debate focusing on Asia's technology future. Conventional wisdom perceives creation of technology to be the preserve of America and Europe. In contrast, Asia was generally considered to be a recipient and consumer of technology, and not its creator.

The past few decades have changed this notion. Most parts of Asia have overcome the historical disabilities caused by their colonial legacy. Many Asian countries have not only made remarkable progress in industrialization, but have also embraced the Knowledge Revolution. They have been able to liberate themselves from poverty and underdevelopment within a generation or two, thanks primarily to their rapid ascent along the technology curve.

Japan was the first to rupture the citadel of the West's

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Speech at Asia Society's 12th Annual Corporate Conference, Bangalore, 11 March 2001

dominance in the domain of technology, with brilliant inventions ranging from consumer electronics to heavy engineering—in short, from chip to ship. Asia's technology trail pioneered by Japan has, in subsequent years, been blazed by many other countries. South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, and in recent years, China have become powerhouses of chip design and fabrication and a wide range of computer and telecom hardware products. Some of them have also made great strides in modernizing traditional industries such as steel-making, cement, chemicals, and textiles.

Since our independence in 1947, we in India, too, have made significant progress in many areas of science and technology. However, international recognition came after the last decade showcased India's growing prowess in information technology. Many Indian cities have, in a very short time, emerged as major centres of software development and exports. Among them, Bangalore has come to symbolize the best of IT in India. It is, therefore, apt for the Asia Society, jointly with the CII, to have chosen this beautiful Garden City as the venue for this conference on Asia's Technology Future.

Friends, I must confess that I am a layman when it comes to technology. The famous futurist Arthur C. Clarke was perhaps speaking for persons like me when he said, "Every new advancement in technology distinguishes itself by being indistinguishable from magic."

What I do know, and what all of us here know, is that technology is a powerful agent of economic growth and social development. In India, use of science and technology has helped us to make a visible dent in poverty. Our self-sufficiency in agriculture is principally due to the transfer of farm technology from lab to land. Today India is the largest producer of milk and the second largest producer of rice, wheat, fruits, and vegetables in the world.

Similarly, some of our business houses have harnessed modern technology and management practices to run a steel

plant with one of the lowest unit costs in the world, build global-size oil refineries, and produce a significantly cheaper anti-AIDS drug. We now have many promising biotechnology companies and research institutions that have begun to harness the opportunities provided by the decoding of the human genome.

Apart from traditional onsite software development, Indian companies have ventured into E-commerce and many IT-enabled services. In this, we are much benefited by the strong partnership between the highly successful IT professionals of Indian origin in Silicon Valley and those in India. We were among the first in Asia to legislate a comprehensive Information Technology Act. Soon, we will also enact a law that will facilitate the convergence of telecom, IT, and broadcasting technologies.

India will embrace technology even more comprehensively and confidently as we modernize our agriculture, industry, services, and governance. We are steadily increasing spending on R&D both in public and private sectors. We have set for ourselves the ambitious target of IT For All by 2008, whose centerpiece is "Operation Knowledge". It seeks to universalize IT and IT-based education at all levels of the education pyramid.

We are acutely aware of the urgent need to bridge the Digital Divide, which can worsen the already existing inequalities in our society. Many innovative projects have been launched in India and in other Asian countries to reach the benefits of IT to rural and underprivileged populations. These include the Grameen Phone Scheme in Bangladesh, the TARA Haat Village Kiosks for Internet-based information service in some parts of rural India, and a highly acclaimed similar project called Gyan Doot in our State of Madhya Pradesh. All of us in Asia—indeed, all developing countries in the world—should learn from one another's experience in this endeavor.

Friends, the debate on the future of technology, not only in Asia but also all over the world, has hinged on one big question—What is desirable for technological progress:

competition or cooperation? Businesses will no doubt favour competition, because of its proven virtues. It forces enterprises to focus on cutting costs, improving quality, expanding markets, and enhancing consumer satisfaction. In the process, it both spurs technological innovation and finds newer commercial applications for it.

However, it seems to me that the world has not adequately adopted the virtues of cooperation, even though every episode of economic slowdown or crisis has reminded us of its imperative need for sustainable development. For example, it has now become obvious that the buoyancy of the economies of rich nations can only be sustained by the rapid all-round growth in the economies of the poor and more populous nations.

Let me elaborate this point. Technology is continually increasing the productivity of the businesses of rich nations. However, their own economies are growing too slowly to absorb the new additions in technology-driven productivity. This is resulting in the frequent cycles of recession, layoffs, and unemployment. This, indeed, is a paradox. Rich nations are witnessing a technology-induced crisis of abundance.

Developing nations can absorb this abundance by rapidly expanding their physical and social infrastructures and, thereby, improving the living standards of their populations. But they are starved of adequate financial and technological resources of their own. Also, multilateral agencies and multinational corporations have not yet evolved effective cooperative mechanisms to infuse greater investments and technological inputs from developed economies into developing ones. This is truly at the root of the shocking socio-economic inequities that we see in the world and also in Asia today.

In this context, I must mention that developing nations like India have sometimes been subjected to technology denial in a bid to thwart their progress in critical areas. Businesses have been barred from selling certain products to us. Of course, such unfair means have only encouraged our scientists

and engineers to intensify our indigenous efforts and succeed against all odds. One of the best illustrations of this is the success story of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), which is also located in Bangalore.

In saying this, I am not invoking here the outdated "aid versus trade" argument. Rather, I am emphasizing the need for a greater cooperative approach towards global development, in which the rapid growth in developing countries serves as the stimulus for sustainable growth in developed economies. For example, the fast-growing economies of Asia are today the largest consumers of a wide range of new technology products, such as cell phones, computers and other Internet devices, processed foods, and consumer electronic items. This shows that Asia, which is home to more than half the world's population, can become the most reliable propeller of technology creation as well as technology consumption in the new century.

Asia's technology future is bright, because it has nearly two billion young people who are ambitious and hard working. They are thirsting for new knowledge and for the opportunity to use it to live better lives. International as well as intra-Asia cooperation is the key to realization of their dreams.

Hence, the one theme that I would like your conference to consider is the need for greater economic and technological cooperation among the nations of the world and, especially, of Asia. For example, there are countries, including in Asia that spend two to three per cent of their GDP on R&D. But they have relatively small populations. On the other hand, a country like India spends less than 1 percent of its GDP on R&D, but it has a huge potential market and also a large and well-developed base of educational and research institutions. By adopting a collaborative approach to research, development and business partnership, we can create a win-win situation for all.

The benefits of such an approach are already visible. Several American IT and non-IT companies have set up large design and product development centres in India. Many of them are right here in Bangalore. Similarly, some Indian IT

companies with globally reputed brand names have outsourced their software development business by partnering with fledgling IT firms in countries like Vietnam, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. Similarly, Indian IT education companies have opened training centres in scores of countries all over the world.

What all this points to, is the growing convergence of technologies, businesses, markets, and economies across Asia and the world. The new century now demands the convergence of the aims and objectives of all the countries on our common planet. We should not forget that the future of technology and business is only a subset of the future of humanity. Equally, we must remember that scientific and technological knowledge is the common heritage of the human race, whose true value lies not so much in the profits of individual businesses but in its ability to improve the quality of life for all the children of Mother Earth.

Can we, for instance, produce affordable vaccines and medicines for all the needy people in Asia and Africa? Can we devise new and low-cost means of providing drinking water and housing for all? Can the dramatic advances in information and communication technologies be brought to the reach of millions of people, who have not as yet either made or received even a single phone call? Can biotechnology help in providing nutritious food and in preserving our environment? Above all, can each and every Asian be enabled to develop to his or her fullest human potential?

It is my firm belief that Asia's technology future—indeed, Asia's future—lies in our collective ability to meet these challenges. It is with this belief that I inaugurate your conference and wish it all success.

# V

# Education, Art and Culture

# An Institution of Academic Excellence

IT GIVES ME great pleasure to be with all of you in celebrating the Silver Jubilee of your school. I am told that in its first 25 years, Jaigopal Garodia Hindu Vidyalaya has already established itself as one of the best schools in Chennai. Your school not only has high academic standards, but has also developed a strong sense of patriotism and social concern.

I am not new to your school. I remember the day in last November when some of you had come to me to give a cheque of Rs. 4.3 lakh for the victims of cyclone in Orissa. I was very touched by this gesture.

All I can say on this occasion, by way of joining thousands of your well-wishers, is:

May your school scale ever greater heights when it reaches the next milestones in its life—the Golden Jubilee, the Platinum Jubilee, and the Centenary.

And, like the famous banyan tree, *Adyar Alamaram*, in Chennai, may your institution also sink scores of sturdy branches into the soil that gave birth to it.

How apt it is that our *Upanishads* describe the tree as the symbol of knowledge. Indeed, the Tree of Knowledge is one of the most beautiful and famous motifs of Indian art. The Buddha attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree.

I have vivid memories of the school in which I studied. My father was himself a schoolteacher. So you can say that the home was also my school, and the school, too, was rather homely.

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Speech on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the Jaigopal Garodia Hindu Vidyalaya, Chennai, 4 July 2000

I should add that when the home also becomes a school, as it should for every student, there is a double advantage. Both parents become "teachers" to their child. In my case, I can say that I learnt as much from my mother as from my father. My mother was not a well-educated person in the formal sense in which we normally understand "education". But a good mother is perhaps the best educator in the world.

The stories from the *Ramayana, Mahabharata,* and the *Puranas* that she told me in my childhood are still etched in mind. At that time, they gripped my mind with the force of their imagination and their mystery. But as I grew up and confronted real life situations, I realized that the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are not mere collections of stories. Rather, they are our lifelong teachers.

Of course, not all schools provide enlightenment to their students, and not all children make the best use of the time they spend in their school. I was told about the hilarious confession of our Rashtrakavi Subramania Bharati, who says in his autobiographical poem:

"At the end of my school years, my father acquired a loss of one thousand rupees and I acquired several bad things. I did not get an iota of good out of it. I am prepared to go to 40,000 temples and swear to this."

I am sure that not a single student from your school must have felt like this. Besides, Bharati was studying in a 19th century school, at a time when India was not free.

During the five decades of independence, we have made tremendous progress in education at all levels. Your own school is a small testimony to this progress. Still, if Bharati were alive today, I wonder what he might say about some of the schools we have in our country today.

And I am not necessarily referring to poorly endowed schools in villages or in urban slums. There are several posh schools, which burden their students with countless costly things but leave the child's soul empty.

So, what kind of education do we need? What kind of schools does India need? What are the responsibilities of teachers and students? And, what are the responsibilities of people like me in politics and Government? I wish to share with you some of my thoughts on these questions, not as an expert, but as someone who knows the value of a good education in the life of a person and a nation.

My long stint in public life has taught me two basic truths. One, the greatest asset that parents can give their child is good education. And two, the greatest investment that a nation can make in its present and its future is also good education.

Unfortunately, after independence we did not pay as much attention to education as we should have. No doubt, Indian education has many successes to its credit. We have created many centres of excellence like the IITs and the IIMs, which have gained global reputation. But, on the whole, our track record in the past five decades shows that we need to seriously address issues of both quantity and quality in our education.

Education is one of the top priorities for my Government. Primary education, in particular, is our primary focus. In the current year's Budget, we have increased the allocation for elementary education by 26.5 per cent. We have also created a separate department for elementary education to focus our efforts in this area.

The Government's efforts alone, however, are not enough to achieve the national goal of "Education For All". Society's own voluntary efforts need to be vastly stepped up to both expand and improve our educational infrastructure. Business houses, NGOs, and more and more wealthy families like the Garodias should come forward to set up new schools and also to improve the facilities of the existing schools.

The benefits of such non-governmental initiatives should reach not only children from the rich and middle-class families, but also those from the poor and rural backgrounds. Similarly, intensified efforts should be made to reach these benefits to

the scheduled castes and tribes, backward classes, minorities, and especially, to girls from these communities.

It is rightly said that when you educate a man, an individual benefits. Whereas, when you educate a woman, not only an individual but also a family and a community benefits. For example, Tamil Nadu has achieved remarkable success in reducing the rate of growth of its population because of the higher levels of literacy among women and also relatively better healthcare services.

However, it is not quantity alone that needs to be increased. We have created a fairly large network of schools, colleges and universities in our country. But somewhere down the line our attention on the quality of education slackened. Our concept of what we mean by education became blurred.

Someone has said that education is what a man retains after he has forgotten much of what he has learnt in school and college. There is some truth, though not the whole truth in this saying. What it means is that education is not only, or even mainly, about acquiring more and more information. A child's mind is not a bank in which he is to be trained to deposit daily quantities of information and withdraw it only during examinations!

Your school may be an exception to this kind of training. But I think that, in general, our schools and colleges suffer from the malady of teaching by rote. Students are trained more to memorize, than to think freely, independently and creatively. They are trained more to uncritically accept what is taught to them, than to doubt and to question and search for answers themselves.

We need schools that mould the total personality of a child—developing his mind, sharpening his intellect, nurturing his creativity, strengthening his body, and, above all, enriching his character and imparting to him the values that make him a good human being and a good citizen.

We need an education that strengthens the bonds of national unity that fosters in young minds a natural inclination to rise above narrow caste, communal and class divisions.

The schools that create such students are the schools that India needs.

The teachers who train such students are the teachers that India needs.

And, the students who develop the discipline to become good human beings and good citizens are the students that India needs.

A few words about teachers. They are the true pillars of any educational institution. The Indian tradition holds them in the highest esteem, as is evident from the words: *Acharya Devo Bhava*. I hear a lot of excited talk these days about distant education and Internet-based education. India needs all these new methods of learning. But let us not forget that technology cannot replace teachers. Rather, it can assist them to do their work better.

I urge Government agencies and managements of educational institutions to pay special attention to the needs of our teachers. India needs more and more teachers who are motivated, who are well-trained and have ample opportunities for periodic re-training and, above all, who have an honoured place in society. I ask all the students in the audience to join me in applauding your teachers and also all the teachers in our country.

Before I conclude, I would like to say a few words about the role and responsibility of Hindu organizations in the promotion of quality education in our society. They have a historic duty to increase their constructive engagement in education, healthcare, and other areas of social welfare.

However, given the sheer size of our country and its population, there is a need for such organizations to significantly increase the scope of their activities. They should especially reach out to those sections of our society that were kept

deprived of education for centuries. For this to happen, it is necessary that the spirit of philanthropy must grow wider and deeper in the Hindu society than is the case today.

On the joyous and proud occasion of your Silver Jubilee, I heartily congratulate the dedicated teachers, diligent staff, generous patrons and, of course, all the bright girls and boys of this illustrious school. I wish you all the best in the years ahead.

# A Culture of Peace and Non-violence

I AM PRIVILEGED to share this moment with people across the world, as we commit ourselves to a Culture of Peace.

Time and again, man has demonstrated belligerent behaviour, both towards his fellow-beings and fellow nations. Unbridled greed and ambition have burdened humanity with the enormous costs of war and strife, which are seen in colossal defense budgets; in the unnecessary loss of innocent lives, and in the mass disruption and uprooting of people. It is in this context that the United Nations General Assembly has most appropriately proclaimed the decade of 2000 to 2010 as one during which world attention should focus on issues relating to peace.

India has always been a believer and practitioner of a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence. From the time of Lord Mahavira, we have been beating the drums of peace, not war. Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of *ahimsa* is the guiding spirit of this nation of one billion people. *Ahimsa* can and should

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Speech while signing the Culture of Peace Manifesto, New Delhi, 9 December 2000

be applied in every walk of life—domestic, institutional, economic, and political. Even today we are proud of the fact that our country has never invaded another country or initiated a war. We seek peace with all our neighbours so that all of us can focus our attention on much-needed development.

The world has been talking peace. Yes, for centuries, we have talked peace. It is time that the people of our planet practised peace. This is easier said than done. How do we go about the business of peace? By talking peace? Or a Culture of Peace? Clearly, that is not enough. What can bring real peace among nations, within countries and within each person's own mind, is a more equitable world where the needs of all humans are met with honour. I do not talk of physical needs alone. We also need to address the spiritual needs of man.

To ensure peace, we must reduce "want". So long as the wants of the human race, individually or collectively, remain unfulfilled, the world will not be able to see peace in its fullest sense. Unfortunately, individual greed, selfishness, and acquisitiveness guide men and nations. Since the time of our ancient civilization, our talisman for reducing "want" has been to reduce our personal consumption voluntarily. In a humble family where every member limits his needs, there is no want, no strife and, therefore, no tension.

Member States of UNESCO and the people of this world should, in the Decade of Culture of Peace and Non-Violence, dedicate themselves to moral rearmament and the road to this would be through "value education". We must revive value education, which was a part of every educational system worldwide, in the olden days.

I am glad that the Brahmakumaris have been able to obtain about thirty million or thirty-five million signatures on UNESCO's Culture of Peace Manifesto. This, I believe, is the highest number of signatures collected by any single organization around the world. This is highly creditable. They have brought good name to themselves as also for their country.

I particularly compliment the efforts of their chief, Dadi Prakashmani. She has made the Brahmakumaris and their Mount Abu headquarters into a global centre for peace and moral re-armament.

I am happy to follow the lead of so many Indians and sign the Manifesto today.

# VI
# Health and Social Welfare

# Open New Vistas for Women

AT THE VERY beginning I would like to make a confession, as a young man I was not in favour of India joining the British Commonwealth but after independence the first Prime Minister, and Freedom Fighter, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, pleaded and propagated the cause of India remaining in the Commonwealth. Now Commonwealth is no longer British, it is universal. And India is very happy to be in the Commonwealth.

It is both a pleasure and a privilege to address this distinguished gathering at the Sixth Meeting of the Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs.

That this meeting should be held here is only natural. As the largest member of the Commonwealth, India has played an active and major role in promoting the fundamental values and principles that form the bedrock of open and democratic societies, human dignity and equality irrespective of race, religion and gender.

These are values and principles that are equally shared by members of the Commonwealth. Indeed, these core values bind us to a shared vision of a democratic world free of discrimination, a world that uniformly subscribes to equal opportunities and equal rights.

As you are aware, India is celebrating her Golden Jubilee as a Republic. We take pride in the fact that we are the world's largest democracy and that, through our Constitution, we embraced the principle of equal rights for all, women and men even before the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted.

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Speech at the Sixth Meeting of the Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs, New Delhi, 17 April 2000

Our commitment to equal rights and human dignity has served us well to face the challenges of the century just gone by. In the 21st century, we are faced with new challenges, as are other countries.

Many of these challenges have a direct bearing on women—their development, their progress and their empowerment. For instance, the challenge of ensuring sustainable development and coping with the socio-economic impact of globalization and structural adjustment.

To meet these challenges, we need to study the differential impact of development plans on women as also the phenomenon of "feminization of poverty". These are issues that cannot be tackled individually. Therefore, we have decided to deal with them structurally and systematically.

Our aim is to remove barriers and roadblocks so that new avenues are opened to a new world of opportunities for women.

*Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee with the delegates of the Sixth Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs, New Delhi, 17 April 2000*

As my colleague has mentioned, in our effort to ensure greater participation by women in the political process, we have introduced a Bill to reserve one-third of the seats for women in our Federal and State legislatures. Such a law already exists for self-government institutions in our rural and urban areas, ensuring increased participation by women in the decision-making process at the grassroot level.

Political empowerment, however, must come along with social and economic empowerment. Therefore, we have worked out a programme to provide free education to women up to graduation, including professional studies.

We have also introduced a Women's Component Plan in all sectors of our national development strategy to ensure that the benefits of development do not bypass women. We are committed to removing gender barriers that stand in the way of equitable access to education health and credit.

Ensuring human rights for women forms a crucial component of democratic India's commitment to safeguarding the human rights of all her citizens. We have created a web of institutions like the National Human Rights Commission, the National Commission for Women, the Minorities Commission, the Commission on Scheduled Castes and Schedules Tribes and the Commission for Backward Classes. Each of these has statutory powers.

Problems faced by women are looked at from various perspectives by these commissions and the Government responds to their recommendations. India's parliamentarians and free media, apart from our powerful and independent civil society, also play a significant role in safeguarding and promoting women's rights. As in any open, democratic society, every policy issue is open to public scrutiny and debate.

India's independent judiciary, too, has time and again

stood up in defence of women's rights. The Supreme Court of India has issued some of the most progressive judgements on the rights of women against gender-based violence, harassment at workplace, denial of property rights and unequal guardianship laws. These judgements have empowered women and our society as a whole, tremendously.

We believe, therefore, that we have made significant progress in the elimination of discrimination against women. At the same time, we acknowledge that a lot more remains to be done.

Ladies and gentlemen, five years after the Beijing Conference, it would be worthwhile to take stock of the status of women across the world. This meeting provides an opportunity for this purpose.

I look forward to the participants, through their deliberations, making an important contribution, on behalf of the Commonwealth, to the agenda of the special session on women of the UN General Assembly in June.

The Commonwealth represents today's world, transcending barriers of the North-South divide and the distance that separates developing economies from developed countries. It can show the way to the need for cooperation among nations and open society within nations so that a just and equitable social order can be ensured in which women do not suffer from the disability on account of their gender identity.

I wish this conference all success.

# Towards All-round Development of Children

LET ME BEGIN by congratulating the Expert Committee, headed by Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, for preparing "The Children's Code Bill 2000" which was presented here today. Indeed, there could not be a more appropriate occasion for this than Children's Day.

I have had a look at the "Children's Code Bill". It is a comprehensive document that examines existing Indian laws in the light of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which India is a signatory.

In order to further our collective obligation as a nation to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and, if I may say, more importantly, in order to fulfil our obligation to the children of this country, we need to tailor our existing laws in accordance with its provisions.

The Government's task in this regard has been greatly facilitated by the recommendations of the Committee headed by Justice Iyer. I thank him, as well as other members of the team. I also thank UNICEF for the assistance rendered by them in this task.

The issues dealt with by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as "The Children's Code Bill 2000", are essentially problems that have been around for many decades—not only in India and other developing nations, but also in developed countries.

Enacting laws to deal with these problems would amount to looking for new solutions to old problems. We really do not need new laws; in fact, we have enough laws on our

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Speech on the occasion of the release of the Children's Code Bill 2000, New Delhi, 14 November 2000

Statute Book. What we need is to make suitable amendments to these laws so that they become relevant to the times and can be implemented with minimum obstacles.

The High Powered Committee has done precisely this. It has tried to incorporate the provisions of the rights of the child as enshrined in the UN Convention into the laws of the land, without proposing radical changes. In a sense, what has been proposed is a comprehensive Code that spells out a child's right to survival, growth, protection and development.

Government will take full note of the proposed Code that seeks to facilitate the implementation of provisions, many of which already exist in the Constitution of India, contained in the UN Convention.

As is well known, nearly two decades before the UN adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992, India had framed a National Policy on Children in 1974. That policy reinforced the Indian State's commitment to the survival, growth, development and protection of children, and 'led to the implementation of several policies and programmes, many of them specifically focused on the girl child.

However, while a lot has been achieved through these programmes, a lot more no doubt remains to be done.

We share problems related to the survival, development and protection of children with many other countries. In some cases, the reasons why these problems continue to persist are the same. In others, customary practices and social beliefs indigenous to India or the region come into play.

For instance, exploitation of children as cheap labour and child prostitution are problems that transcend geographical barriers. On the other hand, problems like female foeticide exist in India and need to be seen in the context of social realities in the region.

Therefore, to deal with some of the problems, countries have to forge common action programmes and act in a concerted manner. At the same time, we in India are committed to

fighting and eradicating customary practices and social beliefs that militate against gender equality and thus deny a child his or her right to not only survival, but also development and protection from exploitation.

I may add that we have come a long way as a nation in eradicating social evils and gender bias. We have to, however, cover further ground and conquer new frontiers of emancipation and empowerment of the girl child and, thus, of women.

Friends, each age of human development across the world has had its own impact—some positive, others negative.

Globalization has no doubt fetched economic growth for individual nations and opened the doors to immense possibilities. At the same time, free market competition has had a negative impact manifested in the form of exploitation of children for cheap labour.

It is no secret that in many developing countries teenaged children are employed to produce goods that, because of their low labour cost, can compete on the price front. Media have reported extensively about products bearing well-known brand names being produced in factories that remind us of the sweatshops of the industrial revolution.

Similarly, it is no secret that wide-scale child prostitution more often than not results from developing countries vying with each other to attract tourist traffic from developed countries, in the process choosing to shut their eyes to a horror that should shame us all.

Surely countries can collectively act on these fronts and not succumb to the lure of easy economic gains which at best can fetch transient benefits while scarring children for the rest of their lives.

The point I seek to stress is that laws adopted by individual countries can be effective only when there is higher level of international cooperation and collaboration to uphold the rights of the child. And this cooperation and collaboration has to extend to fighting poverty.

For, so long as every fourth person in the world is poor, exploitation shall continue to manifest itself in many forms, especially exploitation of children and denial of basic human dignity to the child.

Friends, our Government has listed nutrition, health and education as its priority tasks. We have been laying greater emphasis on the growth and development of the girl child and her empowerment through education.

Despite fiscal constraints, we have increased our spending on the social sector. We shall pursue our agenda to further improve the lot of children, irrespective of their social or economic status and their gender identity.

In these efforts, 'The Children's Code Bill 2000' will be a valuable input. Indeed, Government, as I have already said, shall take full notice of your proposals while formulating legal provisions for the survival, growth, development and protection of children.

I thank you once again for your endeavour.

# Newborn Healthcare—Key to Survival

I AM HAPPY to be with you today. We have just released a document, "Newborn Health—Key to Survival" to mark the beginning of 'Newborn Week.'

When a child comes into this world, it fetches enormous happiness and joy to those who awaited its arrival. But often this happiness turns out to be short-lived, especially among

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Speech while inaugurating the "Newborn Week", New Delhi, 15 November 2000

the economically weaker and marginalized sections of society.

This is primarily because the healthcare needs of a newborn child remain inaccessible to a large number of people for a variety of reasons. Also, awareness levels remain inadequate, especially in rural areas.

In the five decades since Independence, India has no doubt made significant progress in reducing infant and child mortality rates.

But a lot more remains to be done, especially when we factor in the absolute number of infants who die every year in our country.

Children fall victim to vaccine preventable diseases like measles and tetanus, apart from curable diseases like diarrhoea and pneumonia. This is a harsh reality that stares us in the face, as it does in many other developing countries.

No less distressing is the fact that infant mortality, which was steadily declining since the mid-seventies, has now hit a plateau. In the last few years, infant mortality rate has been stagnating at 72 per 1,000 live births.

This is cause for serious concern.

Rapid and steady reduction of infant mortality is one of the most important social development indicators for judging the progress of a nation. Hence, we need to ensure a steep decline in infant mortality rate in order to correct the present situation.

The health of a newborn child and its survival are also closely linked with the health of the mother and the care she gets during pregnancy and childbirth.

Therefore, it is desirable that pregnant woman not only have access to healthcare and advice but also give birth to their children in health centres.

Unfortunately, at present only a quarter of mothers give birth to children in health centres. Most women who give birth

at home do not get the services of a trained birth attendant. This situation, too, has to be reversed to ensure the health of both mothers and their newborn children.

Yet another area of concern is the high prevalence of low birth weight babies in our country. One out of every three newborn belongs to the category of low birth weight babies who are particularly prone to disease and death.

This situation can be corrected if we address the problems—underage mothers, low nutritional status of women, short intervals between successive births and the poor care women often receive during pregnancy.

The Union and the State Governments can tackle many of these issues through the proper implementation of the National Population Policy 2000 adopted earlier this year.

The Policy emphasizes upon improving maternal and child health. Indeed, it mandates a reduction in infant mortality rate to below 30 per 1,000 live births over the next decade.

Reducing infant mortality is more than a social imperative. It has of profound significance for population stabilization. For, there is a direct correlation between infant mortality and population growth. Family sizes tend to be large in countries and regions where infant mortality is high.

For long, newborn care has been equated with hospital-based care. It is true that a small proportion of sick newborn require care in hospital. But most can be successfully looked after at home with the help of primary healthcare provided at the community level.

What is needed is a community-based movement to inculcate appropriate maternal, neonatal and infant care practices. This, in turn, will be greatly facilitated by generating mass awareness that the survival and well being of newborns are a social responsibility.

Indeed, society has an important role to play: by focusing public attention and creating awareness on issues like

appropriate age of marriage and childbirth; nutrition of girls, especially adolescent girls; intervals between pregnancies; care of the newborn; and, ultimate family size. The medical and nursing professions also have an important role to play. Their advice has a profound impact on individuals and families.

The challenge before us is to ensure that basic maternal and child health services are accessible in the remotest part of our country. We are trying to ensure that every pregnant woman has a trained person in attendance during childbirth.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched a "Dai" training programme with a view to ensuring the availability of a trained birth attendant in every village. We shall simultaneously make every effort to motivate more and more women to have their deliveries in health centres. Let us aim to ensure that at least 80 per cent deliveries are conducted in health centres by the end of the next decade.

I call upon India's doctors and paramedics, as well as voluntary associations and community organizations, to help us achieve this goal; to strengthen our various public health programmes.

In this context, it is noteworthy that the National Neonatology Forum, through an innovative collaborative programme, is training doctors, nurses and health workers in essential newborn care. Over the next couple of years, this programme will be expanded to cover all weak districts.

The task before us is difficult but not impossible.

The experience of many a developing country, indeed many a State in our country, demonstrates that it is possible to achieve a significant reduction in infant mortality rate. This can be achieved through effective partnership between Government, voluntary associations, the private sector, panchayati raj institutions and local self-governing bodies.

I would urge the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and National Neonatology Forum to ensure that the enthusiasm

during the Newborn Week is sustained throughout the coming year, and the following years.

With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating the "Newborn Week".

# Fighting a Dreaded Disease

I THANK YOU for participating in this first interaction I have had with business leaders on HIV/AIDS.

We have just seen a presentation about the serious challenge of HIV/AIDS that our country is facing today.

I know that there is variance in statistics about the incidence of the disease in India. While we should strive to have a fairly accurate information about the size of the problem, there is no room for two views about its severity, either at present or in the future.

Without any hesitation, let everybody realize that HIV/AIDS could become, if unchecked, the most frightening killer epidemic in India in this century.

This realization alone can wake up every section of our society to its responsibility in fighting this challenge. It alone can remove the complacency and half-heartedness with which our society is looking at this looming menace.

No section of society, however, can fight this challenge on its own. All of us have to work together.

The responsibility of business and industry in joining this collective struggle is self-evident. Once the geometric progression of the disease reaches a critical level, it will begin to take an ever-increasing toll on the productive sections of

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Speech at the interaction with industry on Government-Business Partnership against HIV/AIDS, New Delhi, 1 December 2000

our population. The consequences of this on the economy of individual business units, as also on the national economy, can be devastating.

It is, therefore, in the nation's long-term interest for business to play a proactive role in dealing with HIV/AIDS now in order to ward off future problems.

I may also add that your contribution to the national campaign against HIV/AIDS is intrinsic to your social responsibility, especially your responsibility towards local communities where your businesses are located.

The experience of countries that have been successful in containing this scourge tells us that we can make a difference if Government, business and social institutions work together.

I, therefore, sincerely call upon all of you—not big business alone, but every member of the business community, including medium and small business units—to join this battle.

The battle has to be fought on four fronts:

First, we should maximize public knowledge that, since there is no cure for this disease so far, prevention itself and prevention alone is the cure. Every Indian should also be made to know that even prevention is impossible through any vaccine, any drug, any injection or any operation. Awareness and responsible behaviour is the only reliable way of prevention.

Second, we have to fully activate all our institutional and administrative measures to prevent the further spread of HIV/AIDS. If we can ensure this, it is quite clearly, half the battle won.

Third, we have to take good care of the people who are already afflicted by this deadly virus. We should ensure that they suffer no discrimination and that their human dignity is not wounded in any way either at work place or at home. Sometimes when I read reports about suicides by HIV positive

persons—often because of the way their families and friends treated them—I wonder how we can let such things happen in our country.

Specifically, I urge you to remove the divide between workplace and home for HIV positive persons. For them, even the work place should become homely. At the same time, owners and fellow-employees should regularly visit them and their families at home to give succour and solidarity.

Fourthly, business houses should actively support focused research for prevention and cure for HIV/AIDS. There is already a global effort in this direction. Our medical research institutions, adequately supported by business groups, should fully participate in this global mission.

Friends, this morning's presentation has given you an idea of what Government is doing to prevent the spread of HIV-AIDS and for the care of afflicted persons. We are fully involving the State Governments and NGOs in our national campaign.

I urge the corporate sector, and other sections of the Indian business community, to fully participate in Government's efforts. In addition, you can undertake many initiatives on your own.

This partnership should cut across traditional industry associations and business groups. Our endeavour should be to ensure how even bus and truck operators, garages and small roadside *dhabas* can effectively participate in this campaign.

There is yet another area where your participation is both necessary and can be very effective. Studies all over the world, including in our country, have shown that migrant workers are especially vulnerable to this disease.

Our society is urbanizing very fast. The number of migrant workers is growing rapidly. Unfortunately, we have not paid enough attention to their working and living conditions. What compounds their condition is their unorganized nature.

Most migrant workers are in some way or the other linked to business activities. I, therefore, urge the Indian business community to reach out to them.

Take the message of HIV/AIDS to them.

Contribute your utmost to improving hygiene, sanitation and the general condition of their work, habitation and healthcare.

Show that you care for them as human beings, and not only as paid workers who are needed for your business operations.

Friends, you have to act with a sense of responsibility towards the nation and towards your own businesses. You have to act philanthropically, and you have to adopt a leadership role.

If I were to suggest an agenda for the proposed Partnership Against HIV/AIDS, its features would be:

- Networking among Government agencies, businesses, voluntary organizations and social institutions for advocacy and partnership;
- Making use of every method and outlet of business advertising and communication to create awareness;
- Funding comprehensive health services for employees and their families;
- Ensuring easy access to condoms among employees and members of the local community;
- Eliminating HIV screening as part of pre-employment physical examination;
- Ensuring non-discrimination in workplaces and introducing effective workplace intervention;
- Joining the national campaign against drug abuse.

It is equally important for business and industry to support activities for income generation for families of employees who

are either down with or have died of AIDS.

I look forward to your suggestions so that we can set up a broad-based partnership, perhaps within a month.

Let me assure you that Government will extend full support to your effort. The Ministries of Industry, Labour, Health and Family Welfare and other agencies of Government will actively participate in carrying the proposed programme forward.

Together, let us strengthen our national campaign against HIV/AIDS. Together, let us pledge to win this battle.

# Women's Empowerment Through Consensus

IT GIVES ME great pleasure to be with you at the launch of "Women's Empowerment Year".

The decision to observe 2001 as "Women's Empowerment Year" has a twin purpose. First, to acknowledge that one of the keys to our nation's socio-economic progress is empowerment of women. Second, to create mass awareness of the linkages between development and women's empowerment on the one hand, and progress and gender equality on the other.

To achieve both these goals, we cannot depend on the normal pace of social change. Instead, we have to hasten the process of social change through affirmative action, forward looking policies and radical strategies.

Gender equality and women's empowerment are alien

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Speech while launching Women's Empowerment Year, New Delhi, 4 January 2001

concepts for us. Indeed in ancient times, women in India had a status that was no means inferior to that of men; on the contrary, in many matters they had an upper hand. She was *Shakti,* revered and respected. Our scriptures say:

*"Janani Janmabhoomischa Swargadapi Gariyasi."*

Distortions, however, have crept in over the last few centuries, greatly harming the status of women in Indian society. The reality we see around us today is vastly different from the past as well as the present constitutional guarantee of equality.

Social customs and practices that have struck deep roots, and are sought to justified by citing religious sanction, have resulted in deprivation of disadvantage to and discrimination against women. In matters related to economic development, women continue to be marginalized—both in policy formulation and programme implementation.

As a result, women are handicapped by unequal access

*Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee presenting Stree Shakti Puraskar marking the inauguration of Women's Empowerment Year, New Delhi, 4 January 2001*

to political, social and economic resources. This, in turn, has resulted in low levels of female literacy, high levels of infant mortality and poor nutritional record. The continually declining sex ratio is not only disturbing for demographic purposes but also because it reflects the status of the girl child.

It is true that state intervention has had a positive impact in lowering infant mortality rate, increasing life expectancy and enhancing access to education and health for women. But we have a long way to go before we achieve all-round gender equality by socially, politically and economically empowering women. In short, ensuring that her constitutional rights are by no means curbed.

For this, as I said, we need to focus on hastening the process of change by creating an environment where every woman is able to realize her full potential and her rights are not circumscribed by social customs and practices. We have to create an environment where women have the freedom of choice, just as men have the freedom of choice today.

This is by no means an easy task. There are many challenges that confront us on path to gender equality and empowerment.

- We have to change those social norms and attitudes that result in glaring inequalities in the access to and distribution of resources—be it land, education, healthcare or credit.
- We have to effectively deal with vulnerability of women to social stresses unleashed by economic reforms and prevent the feminization of poverty.
- We have to fight violence, be it physical or mental, against women.

If we can achieve these goals, we shall succeed in removing barriers and opening the doors to a world of opportunities for women. We will be able to restore to them the social status and dignity which are rightfully theirs.

But Government alone cannot achieve these goals. To succeed, we need the active involvement of all women and men, community based organizations, voluntary associations, panchayati raj institutions, indeed, the entire nation. We need to bring issues of gender equality and women's empowerment to the forefront of public consciousness.

Above all, we need to set examples by practising equality in our own lives so that others are encouraged to abandon practices and customs that are detrimental to social progress.

On its part, Government will soon unveil a National Policy for Empowerment of Women. This was a commitment India made at the Fourth International Conference of Women at Beijing in 1995.

The policy will reflect our aspiration to ensure full and equal participation of women in the decision making process as well as their full access to and control of resources. We propose to set a timeframe for achieving the goals of this policy so that women emerge as equal partners in India's socio-economic progress in the 21st century.

Before I conclude, I would like to congratulate the recipients of this year's Stree Shakti Puraskar. Each one of you has set an example through your dedicated and hard work for women's empowerment.

Let 2001 be a year of change, a year of prosperity, of health and happiness. And let this year mark the beginning of a new era of equality and opportunity for women in India and all over the world.

# A Temple of Healing

I AM HONOURED by Bhagwan Sathya Sai Baba's decision to invite me to inaugurate this magnificent Temple of Healing that he has built in the capital of Karnataka.

I have visited his Temple of Learning at Prasanthi Nilayam several times. I have also seen his super-speciality hospital at Puttaparthi. I had then remarked to myself that the people of Andhra Pradesh were lucky to have such a magnificent hospital. I am glad that neighbouring Karnataka too can now share in the spiritual and physical well-being that Bhagwan generates.

Friends, I have seen many hospitals in India and abroad. In some of them, I have also been a patient—as was the case, most recently at Breach Candy Hospital in Mumbai. However, I can honestly say that I have rarely seen a hospital so magnificent, so grand, and so breathtakingly beautiful as this one.

When I first saw the photographs of this institution, I told myself that his cannot be a hospital. Rather, it looked like a palace, but a palace with a difference—a palace of healing that is equally accessible to the poor as it is to the rich.

I use the word "palace" deliberately. For Baba's is truly an Empire of the Soul, an empire that knows no national boundaries and no divisions of caste, creed, or colour.

From what I know of the meticulous care with which Bhagwan runs every institution of his—and he runs an incredibly large number of them—I am confident that the insides of this hospital will more than match its outsides. As always, he has assembled a team of the best doctors and staff. Again, as always, many of them are voluntarily offering their services to Baba and to the people.

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Speech while inaugurating the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Bangalore, 19 January 2001

The high-domed prayer and meditation hall in the centre of the building, alone makes this place a unique combination of temple and hospital. It will surely generate tranquility and hope in patients' minds. Sanctified by divinity, it will encourage the curing of diseases, not merely of the body, but of the mind and the spirit as well.

Friends, to me, what makes this hospital unique is its largely free services, by which the poor too may get the same five-star healthcare as the rich do. There are many private hospitals in our big cities, whose doors are closed even to the middle class. The rich, too, will be a good deal poorer in the wallet when they take treatment from these hospitals.

By setting up this hospital, Baba has shown that, just as the doors of a temple do not recognize the feet of a rich or a poor man; so too should a good hospital offer its services to all those who need them.

Baba's ideal, which is also my ideal, is best expressed in a Sanskrit shloka:

*Na tvaham kamaye rajyam,*
*Na Swargam na cha punarbhavam*
*Kamaye duhkhataptanaam,*
*Praninaam aarta naashanam*

It means—"I long for neither state power nor for heaven or reincarnation. My only desire is to see that the sufferings of all living beings are removed."

Friends, the present healthcare system in our country is a far cry from this ideal. India still has only about 5 hospital beds per 1,000 population. We also have only 6 or 7 physicians per 1,000 population. As a result, a majority of our population is still serviced by practitioners of traditional medicine or by those who are not adequately trained. Nearly seven lakh children die every year due to diarrhoea, which is easily preventable. More than half of pregnant and lactating women are anaemic. About thirty per cent of the babies born in India are low in birth-weight.

Despite the allocation of vast resources by the Centre and the States, government hospitals and dispensaries are still unable to meet the needs of many Indians. A majority of our people are forced to turn to private doctors and private hospitals, where making money often comes before healing. No wonder, for the poor, healthcare accounts for among the largest chunks of their meagre family budget.

It is now obvious that government's resources alone cannot suffice to meet the healthcare needs of our growing population. We have to think and act in alternative and innovative ways to achieve our objective of "Health for All".

We need to radically revamp the government-run healthcare system to make it more effective and efficient. We need to create greater linkages between public and private healthcare systems.

The Government would like to encourage more private sector investment in secondary and tertiary healthcare. At the same time, I would like to see private practitioners and private hospitals carry a significant share of the burden of public healthcare.

But whether a hospital is in the private sector or in the government sector, it can promote the public good only if the people working in them are guided by the overriding principle of *sewa*. And this is where, we can all learn from the institutions by Baba.

He attracts the most qualified and competent professionals to work in his colleges and hospitals. But what impresses us is not only their qualifications and expertise. It is also the humble, self-effacing, and devoted service that they render to one and all. We need this combination of professional excellence and service orientation in all walks of our national life—in healthcare as well as education, in industry as well as administration.

The task of providing quality healthcare to one billion people is by no means an easy one. It cannot be met by over-

dependence on the curative approach, which is neither affordable nor accessible to many of our citizens. Even rich nations are finding it difficult to sustain their expensive healthcare systems.

It is therefore necessary for India to promote preventive and community-based healthcare. As is well known, prevention is always better than cure. Unfortunately, preventive medicine in our country has so far been largely neglected. In the case of some diseases like HIV/AIDS, prevention through awareness is the only medicine. We also need sustained campaigns aimed at educating the public about the basics of healthy living, a good diet, and exercise.

To start with, we should promote cleanliness in public places in a big way. One of the many things that impresses me about Baba's institutions is how spotlessly clean every nook and corner is, although thousands of people visit them every day. Here too, we can learn from Baba and his devotees.

To make effective and affordable healthcare widely available, we also need to give greater encouragement to Ayurveda, Yoga, other Indian systems of medicine, and homeopathy. Unfortunately, these indigenous systems have not yet found their rightful place in our overall healthcare strategy. Our Government has been doing much to correct this imbalance. I agree, however, that we need to do much more.

Before concluding, I join all of you in wishing this Institute the very best. May all its future plans come through and may it quickly become a sacred symbol of Baba's generosity to the people of this country.

# Government and Private Sector Partnership in Healthcare

I AM VERY pleased to be here this evening with you. I seem to be spending a lot of time with my friends in the medical fraternity. Just yesterday evening I was in Bangalore to inaugurate the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Science. Today, you have invited me to join you.

Yours is not yet another profession requiring specialized knowledge and skills. Yours is a noble profession. In the division of labour for an orderly society, the Creator Himself has chosen you for the Responsibility to cure diseases, remove pain and suffering, and restore people's health. This is why many patients look upon a good doctor who helps them overcome their illnesses as the embodiment of the Divine.

The relationship between a doctor and a patient is rooted in trust and sustained by empathy. Often the patient has what amounts to a blind faith in his doctor. This faith is a precious reward, a reward more valuable than anything that a doctor may receive by way of fee or professional honour.

This was recognized long ago by the great practitioners of Ayurveda in our country. For example, Charaka said, "A physician who fails to enter the body of a patient with the lamp of knowledge and understanding can never treat diseases."

Doctors command not only the respect of individual citizens, but also that of the nation. Just as the old saying, "Health is Wealth" is true for individuals, it is equally true that healthy citizens are the most precious resource of any nation. The medical community, therefore, has a vital role in

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Speech at the Conference of the Association of the Physicians of India, New Delhi, 20 January 2001

nation-building. Which is why, I always look forward to interactions with friends from the medical fraternity to enlighten myself on how we can build a strong and healthy nation.

Friends, India has achieved much in the health sector in the past five decades. At Independence our country had a very small number of trained health personnel and very weak health services. We now have a vast health infrastructure reaching out to the remotest parts of the country. Life expectancy at birth of men in 1951 was 37 years; now it is 62. For women it was 36 years; now it is 63 years. Smallpox and guinea-worm disease have been eradicated.

The goal of polio eradication has almost been reached. Indeed, tomorrow is the last national immunization day of the highly-successful pulse polio campaign.

We have a large pool of highly skilled professionals and super-specialists in all medical fields. We have many medical colleges and technical and nursing institutions for undergraduate and postgraduate training. Our pharmaceutical industry is so well developed that in some areas we have the potential to be world leaders. We also have many top specialty hospitals in India, which attract patients from different parts of the world.

For example, many people asked me why I was not going to the United States for my knee operation and instead taking the risk of getting it done in India. I did not heed their advice because I had full faith in the facilities at some of our best hospitals and in the expertise of Indian doctors. Some of them like Dr. Ranawat, who have been working abroad, have gained global reputation in their specialized fields.

I am happy that not only my faith has been vindicated fully, but also proved to one and all that Indian doctors are among the best in the world.

Friends, despite these achievements, both you and I know that the unmet healthcare needs of the majority of our population remains a matter of serious concern.

Although the infant mortality rate has dropped significantly from 148 in 1951, it still remains high at 72 for every thousand live births. Many children continue to die due to diseases that are easily preventable and for which cheap and effective treatment exists. We have the means to reduce morbidity and mortality in this vulnerable group. It is unacceptable that children especially in poor communities are denied the benefits of cost effective life saving interventions.

Maternal mortality is the condition most directly linked to poverty. Improving maternal health will have a direct positive effect on the economy and well-being of the poorest families. We must find ways of expanding existing interventions in a more effective way on a larger scale.

In the matter of healthcare, a civilized society should make no distinction between the rich and the poor. It is the fundamental birthright of every human being to receive adequate and effective medical care and treatment when needed. The present situation, however, is quite contrary to this ideal. The conscience of this nation cannot accept basic healthcare being reduced to a mere commodity that only the rich can access. Doctors and hospitals must not put profit before patient care, and commerce before compassion, as is sadly the case in a section of our medical establishment,

I am shocked when sometimes I hear stories of medical malpractices, such as commission arrangements between general practitioners, specialists, laboratories, and drug companies. I know that such unethical behaviour is an exception, and not the rule. Yet, even the exception cannot be acceptable.

This malady cannot be fought by laws and regulations alone. It is primarily the responsibility of the doctors and other members of the medical community to raise the standards of self-regulation, self-monitoring and self-correction. This is necessary even to protect the common people's faith in all of you.

Our sincerity and commitment to our goal of "Health for All" will be judged by how quickly we change the present anomalies in our healthcare system. Correcting this imbalance

is not the responsibility of the government alone, although the State has the primary responsibility to enact the right laws and implement the policies for this purpose. The entire society must consciously participate in this change process. The responsibility of the medical community in this effort is undoubtedly greater than that of others in society.

Therefore, I urge you to align your own individual and institutional objectives closely and strongly with the nation's healthcare objectives. You should judge everything that you do and plan against the criterion of how you contribute to the realization of the country's priorities and goals.

In this regard, I must say that the current rigid division between government-run healthcare services and privately-owned medical establishments is not in the interest of the country. There is an urgent need to create a new partnership between the two so that all the physical and human resources available to us, irrespective of whether they are in the government or private sector are put to optimal use.

I urge the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to fully work out this concept of partnership in the proposed National Health Policy,

The need for such partnership between the Government sector and the private sector has become all the more pronounced in view of new challenges such as HIV/AIDS. We have sought large World Bank assistance to upscale the malaria, TB and HIV/AIDS control programmes, so that the benefits of proven interventions and effective strategies are quickly accelerated.

While there is no doubt that substantial funding is required, it is also clear that none of the interventions will succeed without the active support and full participation of all medical professionals.

On this occasion, there are two more issues that I would like to bring your attention.

The most important step that the medical establishment

needs to take is to promote preventive and community-based healthcare. We should have an effective strategy of communication and education to tell all our people the benefits of healthy living, a good diet, exercise, and cleanliness. Many non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, heart ailments, cancer, etc. can only be checked through a change in lifestyle. In this effort of education, not only doctors, but even the media and NGOs have an important role to play.

Second, doctors from different systems of healthcare—Allopathy, Ayurveda, Yoga, Homeopathy, and others should collaborate more closely with each other. Today, despite the best efforts of the Government, all these systems exist independently of each other.

Friends, Indian doctors have shown excellence in various fields internationally, like other Indian scientists and Information Technology experts. Our doctors and engineers have not only proven their excellence but also brought fame and glory to the country.

I extend the Conference of the Association of the Physicians of India my best wishes and hope you have fruitful deliberations.

# Concerted Efforts to Eliminate Child Labour

IT GIVES ME great pleasure to be here at the National Conference on Elimination of Child Labour.

UNICEF, in one of its annual reports, has evocatively observed: "The day will come when nations will be judged not by their military or economic strength, nor by the splendour

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Free rendering of the speech in Hindi at the National Conference on Child Labour, New Delhi, 22 January 2001

of their capital cities and public buildings but by the well being of their people; ...by the provision that is made for those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged, and by the protection that is afforded to the growing minds and bodies of their children."

India fully subscribes to this ideal, this universal aspiration. We believe that the right to a joyful childhood, leading to a life full of opportunities, is the fundamental right of every child. Our children are the future of our nation. We are committed to nurture them through their childhood and their most impressionable and formative years, so that they can realize their full potential and contribute richly to the development of their motherland.

However, the continued existence of millions of working children in our society is a reminder of the extent of the task that lies ahead of us. As per the 1991 census, their number is 11.28 million. This is a staggering figure. It is also a pointer that the responsibility for elimination of child labour cannot be compartmentalized and left to any one Ministry or Department of Government. I am happy that this conference shows a close collaboration between the Ministries of Labour and Human Resource Development.

The sheer magnitude of the problem, as also its multifaceted nature, makes it imperative that we adopt a holistic approach, involving the entire society. This alone can make a difference.

Since Independence, our country has overcome many problems through the combined efforts of the Central and State Governments, private sector, and non-governmental organizations. Infant mortality rate has declined by half from 146 per thousand in 1951 to 72 per thousand or below now. Life expectancy has also grown from 32 years in 1951 to 63 years.

We have reached a literacy rate of over 60 per cent, which was just 18 per cent in 1951. However, there is great imbalance across the country in the area of children's education and welfare. We have States like Kerala, where nearly all the children in the age group of six to fourteen years are attending

schools. Himachal Pradesh, too, is moving towards this distinction. This contrasts starkly with the poor performance in several other States in the north and the east. Even in these States, wherever educational reform programmes are implemented, we see a progressively higher enrolment in schools. There is also a visible decline in the school drop out rate.

These are positive signals. They show that, with collective and committed efforts, we can certainly achieve universal education and 100 percent literacy. Doing so would be a big step towards elimination of child labour.

Hence, my sincere appeal to all the District Collectors who have gathered here is this: Go all out to strengthen the partnership between the Government, non-governmental educational institutions, voluntary organizations, and business establishments in your respective districts. Expand and improve the network of both formal and non-formal educational activities, so that no family with a working child is left out.

Concentrate, especially, on working girls. Her educational needs are usually neglected both by her family and by the society at large. Education of girls and young women is critical for achieving many of our important goals in social development. By investing in them, we invest in India's future.

Friends, 2001 is the Year for Women's Empowerment. It would be befitting that, at this juncture, the programmes are restructured to pay special attention to working girls.

We should ensure that working children not only come to schools, but are also retained in the formal system. The enforcement machinery will have to gear itself with great vigilance and sensitivity.

I appeal to the employers to join the national efforts by actively and voluntarily discouraging the employment of children in industries and other economic activities. Their visible presence in this effort will keep middlemen at bay.

Even though elimination of child labour is our goal, in

the transition period our effort should be to create adequate and easily accessible educational opportunities for working children. For example, restaurants and other such clusters of economic activity in the unorganized sector employ many children. These children live far away from their homes, with little social security. We should make it the responsibility of the employers to create, with the help of NGOs, suitable educational facilities for such children. They could, for instance, set aside their own premises for conducting classes in evening hours.

Many poor children, especially girls, work as domestic help in our country. It should be made the responsibility of the families that employ them to take care of their education. They should be given leave for a few hours each day, so that they can attend classes in nearby schools. There are some NGOs in our cities, which have set up non-formal neighbourhood schools specifically to cater to the educational needs of such children. Many socially conscious housewives have been working in such neighbourhood schools in their spare time in the afternoons. These NGOs should be supported fully.

Friends, working children need not only education, but also protection of their dignity, which is one of the few personal possessions they can have. Unfortunately, they are frequently robbed of this. Sometimes, even the police do not behave properly with them. It is an experience that leaves almost a permanent scar on their psyche. What we need at all levels is greater sensitivity and compassion; a humane and helpful attitude that recognizes that these children are a precious asset of our society who, with proper help, can have a bright future ahead of them.

I would like that National Awards be instituted to encourage and recognize the efforts being made by various organizations in the field of elimination and rehabilitation of child labour. Such awards could be instituted even in districts.

The will of the nation and the commitment of the Central and State governments to eliminate child labour are abundantly

reflected in the Constitution and in several other laws of the land. In keeping with the National Child Labour Policy, we have been both active and proactive in tackling this problem. We have launched the National Child Labour Projects in areas of high concentration of this problem. Further, our various anti-poverty policies have also focussed attention on these areas.

The problem of child labour is fundamentally a problem of poverty. The principal aim of economic reforms is to eradicate poverty, so that we can also eradicate several problems of underdevelopment, including child labour. Our Government has taken many initiatives to accelerate and broaden economic reforms. I am confident that these reforms will enable India to achieve faster economic growth and to remove both regional and social imbalances in development. I urge all sections of our society to further strengthen the consensus behind the process of economic reforms.

Friends, I would like to use this occasion to share my thoughts on some other subjects with District Collectors who have gathered here today. It is not often that we call them to New Delhi. This conference, therefore, is an opportunity for me to have a direct interaction with them.

A District Collector is a very important link between our people and the Government. Indeed, he or she is the face of the administration at the local level. Most of the Government's policies and programmes, especially in the social sector, are implemented through district administration. Besides the onerous responsibility of law and order, you are also required to facilitate and assist trade, business, and industry in your respective districts. From polio eradication to population control, from investment promotion to orderly management of mega-events like the Kumbh—a District Collector is expected to carry out a hundred different tasks, like a true all-rounder.

I really admire District Collectors for their ability to carry the burden of so many tasks on their shoulders. Often, these are young shoulders. A civil servant's posting usually begins from the sub-district level. I have met with many young

officers as District Collectors, and their energy, enthusiasm, and idealism always impresses me. These qualities should be retained throughout your career.

I applaud you for your good work. However, I would also like you to know that both the Government and the people have very high expectations from the district administration. There is a tremendous hunger for development all across the country, especially among those who have been deprived of even the basic benefits of development.

Our people are no longer satisfied with promises from their elected representatives and governments. They want good governance and performance. It would not be wrong to say that they are impatient for performance. As election after election in recent times have shown, they reward those who perform and show the door to non-performers. All political parties have had this experience in India's increasingly demanding democracy.

I know that elected representatives and their governments have their own specific responsibilities to deliver good governance. At the same time, all governments, irrespective of which party or coalition runs them, depend on the district administration to improve their performance. I, therefore, urge you to gear up the administration at the district level to both meet unfulfilled targets and goals, and also to face new challenges emerging on the horizon.

In discharging your responsibilities, you should actively enlist the participation of the people and their elected representatives. Work in close concert with Zilla Parishads. Rope in NGOs, voluntary organizations, and religious establishments. There is a tremendous potential in them to do constructive work.

As Vinoba Bhave used to say, *"Asarkari, asarkari hota hai"*—which means, non-Governmental work is effective work. I would only add that, when *sarkari* and *asarkari* efforts are combined, they become ten times more *asarkari*.

Dear District Collectors, you are an influential person in your district; therefore, lead by personal example. A good District Collector is fondly remembered by the people long after he leaves. People's admiration and regard is the highest recognition for a civil servant.

With these words, I inaugurate this National Conference on Child Labour and wish it all success.

# Towards the Goal—Health for All

I HAVE GREAT pleasure in conferring the Rotary International Pulse Polio Championship Award on Dr. Harsh Vardhan.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan's role in the Pulse Polio Programme in the country is well known to all of us. He is a politician of a different kind. He is first a health activist and then a politician. He joined politics with the laudable objective of using his considerable medical knowledge and experience for serving the common man.

I think that Dr. Harsh Vardhan richly deserves this award for his distinguished contribution to our society's *Swasthya Vardhan,* that is, promotion of health and well-being.

As president of the Delhi Medical Association and later, as Minister of Health and Family Welfare of Delhi he took strong personal interest in all major public health causes. I still remember his able leadership of the campaign against dengue fever, which had struck Delhi a few years ago.

He has played a pioneering role in India's highly successful Pulse Polio Campaign.

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Speech while presenting the Rotary International Pulse Polio Championship Award to Dr. Harsh Vardhan, New Delhi, 22 January 2001

Only yesterday, we conducted the last of the scheduled National Immunization Days for the eradication of polio. As all of us know, this has been the biggest exercise in mass mobilization for a public health cause.

Only a few other events, such as our general elections or the Maha Kumbh, surpass this campaign in scale or enthusiasm.

As Health Minister of Delhi, Dr. Harsh Vardhan persuaded the Delhi Government to accept the challenge of starting a Pulse Polio Programme within Delhi, much before this programme was launched nationally. Even after ceasing to be a Minister, he has been actively associated with this campaign with remarkable single-mindedness. I am happy that he is assisting the WHO in Polio Eradication work not only in India, but also for the entire world.

By honouring Dr. Harsh Vardhan we are not only honouring an individual, but also highlighting the importance of such national health initiatives.

Now that we have nearly won the war against polio, it is necessary for all of us to replicate the experience of the Pulse Polio Campaign for launching similar battles against other major health problems. Our Government is fully committed to the realization of the goal of "Health For All". Towards this end, we understand the critical importance of partnership with the WHO and other such agencies.

For success in such future battles, we need more and more crusaders like Dr. Harsh Vardhan. I once again heartily congratulate him for this honour and wish him the best in all his endeavours. I also appreciate Rotary International for their contribution to this noble effort.

# VII
# International Affairs

# India and Italy Share a Common Heritage

I THANK YOU for your gracious words of welcome. We are, indeed, delighted to be here today in this historic and beautiful city of Rome. My delegation and I have been deeply touched by the warm hospitality extended to us. I also thank you for your generous words addressed to me and my country.

India and Italy are ancient lands whose achievements constitute a common heritage of mankind. Both countries have contributed to the understanding of each other's culture in our respective regions.

Italian was the first European language into which our ancient epic, the *Ramayana*, was translated. The flowering of the Italian genius in the Renaissance has provided masterpieces of cultural and intellectual attainment that inspire us even today.

The Italian Institute for the Middle East and Far East in Rome has produced some of the best known European Indologists. We are happy that in India, too, we have as many as eight universities with Chairs of Italian language and culture.

Italy is a priority for India on the dawn of the 21st Century. It has the fifth largest economy in the world and one that has grown faster than that of most other industrialized nations in the last 20 years.

We have been impressed by the dynamism that has been exhibited by the family-owned small and medium enterprises in Italy.

It is, therefore, a matter of satisfaction that bilateral trade

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Speech at the Luncheon hosted by the Italian Prime Minister, Rome, 26 June 2000

and economic linkages have been expanding between our two countries. However, we believe that the commercial exchanges that take place do not reflect fully the potential that exists for mutually beneficial co-operation between our two countries.

We hope that the business meeting being organized by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the *Confindustria* will contribute to the further realization of this potential.

I welcome their presence at this lunch and hope that our interaction later today will be productive and mutually beneficial.

The Indian economy has, as you are aware, registered significant progress during the last decade. It is our view that as our economy grows and liberalizes further, economic interaction between India and Italy should also grow.

Our average annual growth rate in the current decade has been more than six per cent and this trend will, by all indications, be maintained if not bettered.

A second generation of economic reforms is now in place in India—the insurance sector has been opened up substantially, the foreign exchange sector and competition policy is being liberalized and automatic approval has been introduced for foreign direct investment in all but six minor areas.

We are confident that Italian industry will take advantage of this opening up for the further augmentation of economic and commercial linkages between our two countries.

Excellency, it is indeed a matter of satisfaction for us that economic development in India has taken place in a democratic framework.

Our endeavour of maintaining a plural, secular and democratic state has, in fact, been a unique experiment in the world.

We are convinced that freedom and democracy provide the strongest bases for peace and prosperity. We will remain

committed to these principles in our efforts for fully meeting the rising socio-economic aspirations of the people of our country.

India today is a victim of cross-border terrorism sponsored by its neighbour.

Indian remains open to a composite dialogue process with Pakistan. However, the only essential ingredient is abjuring of violence and cross-border terrorism—principles that are integral to the peace process.

Italy and India have a shared vision of the future of international relations in the 21st century. This includes the reform of the United Nations.

The United Nations Security Council must be made more representative with developing countries, including India, inducted as permanent members to reflect the changes in the UN membership and today's political realities.

On any objective criteria, India's credentials for permanent membership are persuasive. Italy and India should work together to advance the process of democratizing the Security Council and making it more fully representative of the realities of the 21st century.

Excellency, I leave tomorrow for Lisbon for the first-ever India-EU Summit. The European Union represents an emerging new order in a multi-polar world, where India has its own role to play.

The Summit opens a new chapter in our partnership and represents the culmination of our joint efforts to forge an institutional framework for dialogue between India and the European Union.

The EU is our largest trading partner, one of the most important investors in India, an important source of technology and home to a large Indian diaspora. We look upon Italy as a close friend of India in the Union and it is, therefore, only

appropriate that I should visit Rome on the eve of the Summit.

We look forward to your support in our endeavours to build stronger linkages with the European Union that, we are convinced, would be mutually beneficial. We strongly believe that the Summit with the EU should be institutionalized on an annual basis.

I thank you, Excellency, once again for the warmth with which we have been received in Italy. We will cherish the memories of our stay in your beautiful country.

# Growing Indo-Italian Bilateral Trade

IT IS A great pleasure for me to be present on this occasion when new Indo-Italian business links are being forged.

The Indian industrialists who are present here today represent some of the best that India has and cover a wide spectrum of trade and industry. The presence of so many distinguished representatives of the Italian business community is clearly indicative of the possibilities that both countries see in forging new links of trade, commerce and industry.

There is much that India and Italy share-civilizationally and historically. These commonalities are millennia old. There is much that we can share in the new millennium, especially in terms of trade and economic cooperation, and I have no doubt that we shall.

Both countries are rooted in history that stretches back thousands of years; we are both inheritors of a rich legacy of

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Speech at Indo-Italian Business Meeting, Rome, 26 June 2000

which we can be justifiably proud. Despite cultural differences and the geographical distance that separate us, our contacts are not new; nor is our relationship of recent vintage.

History bears witness to extensive commercial relations and diplomatic contacts between India and the Mediterranean region, especially the Roman Empire. Excavations at Pompeii have revealed traces of Indian art, including an ivory statue of Lakshmi, the Indian goddess of wealth and prosperity. The antiquity of these finds has been traced back to the first century BC.

These contacts were established through traders and travellers. And nourished by interest in each other's civilizational heritage and cultural identity. Contacts that were to later open the doors to a lasting economic, social and political relationship between India and Europe.

For instance, Fillipo Sassetti, a famous sixteenth century Italian trader and intellectual, was the first to write about the Sanskrit roots of Latin and Italian in his comparative study of these languages. This formed the genesis of path-breaking research by Sir William Jones on the common linkages of Indo-European languages.

These and other studies have revealed India's contribution to Roman, and, indeed, European culture. Words from Sanskrit can be found in the Latin dictionary. Many nouns and numerals in Latin and Italian owe their origin in Sanskrit, providing a remarkable civilizational linkages rarely shared among other countries.

We are no doubt proud of India's contribution to the world of literature, art and architecture. But we also acknowledge the contribution of others.

Michelangelo, Leonardo de Vinci and Raphael are names that are well known and respected in India. Dante's immortal work forms part of the syllabus in college and university studies. Galileo's life inspires our young. Our history textbooks

mention Julius Caesar, Augustus and Constantine alongside Chandragupta Maurya, Ashoka and Akbar.

Nineteenth century Italian literature reflects certain sensitivity towards India that goes beyond philosophy and aims at comprehending the framework and profound values of Indian civilization. Italian author Gaspare Gorresio was the first in Europe to translate and publish the *Ramayana*. Another Italian scholar, Angelo de Gubematis, was the founder of an academic journal on Indology.

The commonalities go beyond our shared past; they extend to present times.

We share a tradition of commitment to democratic institutions, a commitment born of both Italy and India's hard struggle for independence. I recall that during our independence struggle, leading lights of your *risorgimento* (renaissance) and freedom movement influenced the thinking of India's nationalist leaders.

More recent times have seen further strengthening of these cultural, political and economic ties.

Indeed, it is a matter of great satisfaction that during the last decade, Italy and India have built upon the foundation of traditional friendship and developed a multifaceted relationship anchored in trade, scientific cooperation and cultural exchange.

Now that we have entered a new millennium, India and Italy face a common challenge: How to preserve our history, culture and identity in an increasingly globalized society and economy. We also share an opportunity from which both nations stand to gain—the opportunity to conquer new frontiers of economic cooperation between India and Italy.

If we look at the recent history of economic cooperation between India and Italy, we will find that since India's independence, a thousand joint ventures were set up. More than half of them followed the liberalization of the Indian economy in 1991.

While Indo-Italian bilateral trade has been growing steadily, Italy, has emerged as India's fourth largest export market in the European Union. It is also an important source for meeting some essential import needs of India.

Nonetheless, a two-way trade flow, which is just over $ 2 billion, does not represent the potential that exists. It will be a challenge for this distinguished group to set an ambitious, but realizable target, of taking two-way trade flows to $ 5 billion by 2004 and doubling it thereafter over the next 5 years.

Similarly, total approval for Italian investment to India over the last decade has been a modest $ 1.3 billion, while realization has been significantly lower. We need to examine ways and means as to how Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from Italy can be substantially increased and the realization ratio raised.

The Indian economy, over the past few years, has been on a steady growth course. We have successively achieved GDP growth at over six per cent and have an ambitious target of crossing seven per cent over the next few years. Supported by our strong macro-fundamentals, structural and sectoral reforms have also continued at a rapid pace.

Our economic reform initiatives cover important sectors of India's economy, particularly infrastructure, financial services and public sector undertakings. They also include doing away with approvals for foreign investment by putting them on the automatic route and adopting measures for enabling Indian industry to meet the challenges of globalization.

Our market liberalization strategy offers enormous scope for investments from Italy, both in what could be described as the "Old Economy" as well as the "New Economy".

In the "Old Economy", the scope for investment is clearly pronounced in the area of infrastructure, particularly construction industries like roads, ports and civil construction. There is also considerable scope for active participation in our

effort to modernize our traditional industries like textiles, cement and steel, where you have considerable expertise.

Beyond this, of course, there is the "New Economy" where India offers a particularly attractive destination.

Given our attitudinal disposition and a large pool of skilled manpower, we have taken a number of measures to foster knowledge-based industry. We are determined to become a leading power in Information Technology. Reforms in the telecommunications sector are moving forward. Laws and regulations truly based on convergence would further support these initiatives. Similarly, in the area of pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, particularly genome research, India provides vast skills and diversities to scale new horizons.

You thus have a wide choice of both the "click" and the "brick" economy in which your strengths can be combined with our attitudinal skills, manpower and a large diversified industrial base.

There is yet another area of commonality, which I must mention.

We have not embraced, just like you have not, globalization in a blind manner. We are sequencing the pace of change to suit our own needs, particularly in sensitivity to its social, cultural and human consequences, so that transitional adjustments are orderly.

This is particularly so in the area of privatization and disinvestment where we have many lessons to draw from the Italian experience. The transition from a socialist model of growth, which we practiced for many decades, to an economy governed primarily by market forces, has to be calibrated with care and caution.

We also need to ensure that the focus of change affects all segments of economy and society, and that the social sector does not get neglected. Apart from changes in the industrial structure, the next few years will see India placing importance on bringing about changes in the agriculture and social sectors.

Indeed, we are focusing attention on areas like rural connectivity, drinking water, education, rural sanitation and primary health. These are also areas where private initiative has an important role to play.

In the expanding Indian economy with a well-diversified policy of economic liberalization covering different segments of industries, the scope for co-operation will be ever increasing.

As Italy plays an increasingly important role in shaping European decisions, India hopes to emerge as an important global player. We not only aim at becoming an engine of growth in Asia but to also support the globalization process in other parts of the world.

We hope that your deliberations today, particularly during the session after I have left, will be able to delineate specific areas where Indo-Italian economic co-operation can be further fortified.

I look forward to the outcome of an action plan. Indeed, I am confident that this meeting will result in such a plan, given the interest and level of participation on both sides. Let this meeting herald an era of growing Indo-Italian economic co-operation.

# Enriching Relationship with Portugal

IT IS A matter of utmost satisfaction for me to be here today on the historic occasion of the first-ever India-EU Summit. At the outset, let me convey my deep appreciation for the initiative

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Speech at the Joint Press Conference with Portuguese Prime Minister and EC President, Lisbon, 28 June 2000

taken by the Portuguese Government to institute the process of Summit-level dialogue between India and the European Union. This Summit reflects the warmth and depth of the relationship between India, the European Union and Portugal, one of the important members of the European Union.

Our discussions at the Summit today were most useful and enabled us to take stock of our bilateral relationship and to identify steps to farther enrich our relationship. We believe that this Summit, which will hereafter be held on a regular basis, is the harbinger of a new India-European Union partnership in the 21st century. We look forward to welcoming the future Presidency to the next Summit in India in the year 2001.

The Joint Declaration that we adopted today is illustrative of the depth and the dimension of our relationship. This is a broad statement of India-EU relations which provides a blueprint for upgrading the relationship to a qualitatively higher level. The Agenda for Action which was also adopted includes joint initiatives in the political, commercial and economic fields. This Declaration shows a commonality of views between India and the European Union on many issues, both political and economic, including a shared conviction that we need to build up a new strategic partnership in the new country. I have no doubt that the ideas outlined in this document will contribute substantively to the further strengthening of the India-EU partnership.

Our discussions this morning covered our bilateral political and economic relations, our views on developments in our region and in Europe, as well as on international issues of mutual interest.

India and the EU share a deep concern about the threat posed by international terrorism, with its inter-linkage with drug trafficking, to regional and international peace and security. We also reflected on the need to work closely together to

promote global peace and security. Our resolve to cooperate in this regard is reflected in the Joint Declaration.

On the economic side, we went into the prospects for beneficial cooperation, both at the bilateral and multilateral level. The EU is presently India's largest partner in trade and investment. However, we have no doubt that there is immense potential for further augmenting the levels of bilateral trade and investment. We have, during our discussions today, dwelt upon the opportunities available as a result of the introduction of the 2nd phase of India's economic reforms. We believe that as a result of the growth achieved by India in crucial sectors, especially, information technology, there is immense scope for further cooperation. We look forward to greater flow of FDI from the EU, especially in the areas of infrastructure development, telecommunications, power etc. I am confident that the India-EU Civil Aviation Financing Agreement, which we signed today, will be a useful institutional arrangement which will buttress our economic and commercial relations. The India-EU Business Summit at which I was the keynote speaker, was a highly productive one. At this Summit, Indian and European businessmen were able to hold concurrent working sessions on infrastructure, information technology and telecom, bio-technology and infrastructure, information technology and telecom, bio-technology and R & D and financial services, also to interact with the Indian Ministers for Finance, commerce & Industry and Information Technology. I am sure that many concrete initiatives for mutually beneficial co-operation will flow from it.

It is, therefore, in a spirit of optimism and confidence that we have concluded the first Summit meeting today. I am confident that our further meetings will reinforce the progress that we have made today in Lisbon.

# India and the European Union Friendship

I VISITED LISBON from 27 to 29 June, 2000 to join the leaders of the European Union at the first ever Summit held between India and the European Union. The Summit was attended on the European side by the Prime Minister of Portugal, Mr. Antonio Guterres; the Secretary General / High Representatives for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Mr. Javier Solana and the President of the European Commission, Mr. Romano Prodi. I was assisted by External Affairs Minister, Shri Jaswant Singh; Finance Minister Shri Yashwant Sinha; Commerce and Industry Minister Shri Murasoli Maran and Minister for Information Technology, Shri Pramod Mahajan.

The India-EU Summit was a historic event, which symbolized the goal of India and the European Union to build a new strategic partnership based on common values and aspirations.

I shared with the European leaders our perception that terrorism remained a major threat to international peace and stability.

In this context, I drew the attention of the European leaders to the threats faced by India from cross-border terrorism and of the dangers posed by extremists religious groups which were spreading intolerance and violence within our region. The EU extended full support for the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism sponsored by India.

We agreed on the importance of sustaining a dialogue between our respective civil societies. An Indo-EU Round Table comprising of eminent non-official personalities on both

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Statement after returning from Europe tour, New Delhi, 30 June 2000

sides and a network of Think Tanks will be established as a part of this dialogue.

On the economic side, we agreed to elevate our co-operation through the enhancement of trade and investment. The EU agreed to encourage larger flows of Foreign Direct Investment especially in the infrastructure sector.

Following our discussions, the EU announced that an additional textile quota of 3,500 tonnes would be released for India under exceptional flexibility. Discussions would continue on prospects of further release of textile quotas under this provision.

An agreement was concluded with the EU for financing infrastructure projects in the field of civil aviation.

We found common ground in our discussions on environment issues and agreed that a Joint Working Group on Environment would be set up.

We agreed on institutional arrangement for carrying forward the India-EU dialogue. The summits will take place hereafter on a regular basis. I invited the European leaders to the next summit, which will take place in India next year. Annual dialogues will also be held at the level of the External Affairs Minister and other Ministers, as also the meetings between the senior officials on both sides.

My visit to Lisbon was also utilized for a bilateral dialogue with Portugal. I had detailed discussions with President Sampiao and Prime Minister Guterres, which covered bilateral, regional and global issues of common interest.

With Portugal, we have transcended our colonial past and entered into a new relationship based on mutual respect and appreciation. In the recent past, visits have taken place to Portugal of our President, the Vice President and the External Affairs Minister. During our stay, my colleagues and I experienced the exceptional warmth and the hospitality of the Portuguese leaders and the people.

Portugal has endorsed India's legitimate claim for joining the Security Council as a permanent member. There was equally strong support for India's initiative for a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.

We agreed to strengthen our economic ties. Portugal expressed appreciation of our economic progress in recent years, especially in areas like Information Technology. It was agreed that a Joint Working Group would be set up on Information Technology.

A Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement (BIPA) was signed with Portugal during my visit.

The Portuguese leaders made warm references to India's emergence as a global player. We shared perceptions on multi-polarity and agreed to work closely together for International Peace and Prosperity.

I invited the President and the Prime Minister of Portugal to visit India. It was agreed that the dates of the visits would be decided on the basis of mutual convenience.

I am convinced that my visits to Italy and Portugal have further strengthened the bonds of friendship and co-operation between India and the European Union.

I had an extremely productive discussion with President Ciampi and Prime Minister D'Amato on a range of regional and international issues of common interest. Italy appreciated our concerns on cross border terrorism and expressed support for our draft Convention on International Terrorism. I sensitized the Italian leadership with regard to our security and strategic concerns.

Italy is also appreciative of our economic reforms programme and would like to improve and increase trade with India. An agreement on tourism was signed. Italy is greatly interested in our expertise in IT.

# A Vision of Cooperative Endeavour

IT IS A great pleasure to return to Asia Society. It is a privilege to once again address this distinguished gathering of scholars, thinkers, captains of industry and practitioners of foreign policy.

Two years ago, I had the opportunity to share my thoughts with you on future relations between India and the United States of America. This March, President Bill Clinton and I outlined the vision of a new relationship between the world's two largest democracies in the 21st century.

This vision is anchored in something that is fundamental to both countries. And, is best captured in the joint declaration we signed, A Vision for the 21st Century: "We are nations forged from many traditions and faiths, proving year after year that diversity is our strength. From vastly different origins and experiences, we have come to the same conclusions: that freedom and democracy are the strongest bases for both peace and prosperity, and that they are universal aspirations, constrained neither by culture nor levels of economic development."

As India and the United States work to deepen their ties, these common conclusions are greatly strengthened by institutions such as Asia Society.

You provide a forum to examine the antiquities of Asian civilizations, study current Asian affairs and analyze possible future developments. These interactions have helped us understand how the USA perceives Asia, especially India. I hope they have also helped members of the Asia Society acquire a deeper understanding of India's aspirations and her

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Speech at Asia Society, New York, 7 September 2000

desired place in the world. Since I last addressed Asia Society members, there have been several political and economic developments in India.

In the fall of 1999, we had a fresh mid-term general election. By giving a clear and decisive mandate for the National Democratic Alliance, the people of India have once again reposed their faith in our policies and programmes. More importantly, they have wholeheartedly reiterated their unflinching commitment to democracy. Ironically, even as my Government was being sworn in, an elected Government in our neighbourhood was being dismantled and democracy being snuffed out by that country's military. The irony was even greater because the coup took place in the dying light of the 20th century whose passage into history was supposed to herald a new era free of militarist triumphs over democratic values.

These and other developments in India and her neighbourhood represent, in a larger sense, India's success as a democracy in South Asia, indeed, in Asia. The political,

*Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee speaking at Asia Society, New York, 7 September 2000*

economic and social transformation that is taking place in India today embodies the aspirations of a billion people as well as our Government—equality of opportunity, power of participation and freedom to succeed.

We believe that empowering the individual means empowering the nation. And, empowerment is best served through rapid economic growth coupled with rapid social change. To keep pace with the fast changing global economy, we have taken several steps to deepen and broaden the process of economic reforms. It is true that only by opening our doors can we usher in the wind of change. But, it is equally true that we need to be cautious so that all we have and the values are protected if the wind were to turn into a storm. And, because we are a vibrant democracy, we have to be sensitive that the weak and the vulnerable benefit from economic reforms and globalization.

We will continue to make our markets more conducive to enterprise and initiative. We will continue to make our institutions stronger and more transparent. We will continue to invest in people, who are our greatest resource and strength. In short, the course we have charted hinges on the twin goals of economic growth with social equity. Impatient investors and eager sellers can often be heard saying that India is slow to change. To them, I have this to say: We are a diverse democracy and we need to carry the people with us. Efforts are being made in this direction and we are confident of success. India today is a nation on the move. The momentum for progress has started gathering speed. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in industries that will shape global economic relations of the future, industries that are also the prime movers of Indo-US relations—information technology, knowledge intensive industries, entertainment, communications and services. I would also urge those who tend not to notice this change to heed the fact that we have averaged a stable and consistent growth of over six per cent a year in the last decade. We have laid the foundation for significantly higher long-term growth of

seven per cent and beyond. This is something few economies can claim with certitude.

It is, in a fundamental sense, our emphasis on stable political and dynamic economic environments that has helped us accelerate growth.

Openness and transparency, rule of law and free flow of information that characterise democracy are also the institutions on which durable and stable market economies are founded.

And, an increasingly open and dynamic India does not see its socio-economic development in isolation. We see our fortunes linked to the prosperity and stability of our Asian neighbours, indeed, to that of the global community. Friends, India's historic and civilizational role in Asia over millennia is well recognized. A large number of countries in Asia trace the roots of their cultural traditions to India. India has been, and continues to be, the link between West Asia and East Asia. In a sense, India is central to the Asian identity.

Much of the harmony and stability that we seek in Asia would depend on how India evolves and reflects its growing strength. It would depend on not only economic progress, but also how best we are able to nurture and strengthen our democratic way of life and our plural society. It will also depend on our success in ensuring peace and stability around us. In this great endeavour, I am sure we will derive strength and encouragement from our growing, cooperative relationship with the United States of America. We are conscious that for all the promise of cooperative prosperity, Asia also faces risks and challenges to its future security environment. Asia is still striving to cement its various fault lines, reconcile past differences with future inter-dependence, confront the challenge to progressive and liberal values from terrorism and religious extremism that belongs to the medieval age, and cope with social strains caused by unequal development.

Asia faces future risks from possible aggressive assertion of interests and claims. Across the immense space and diversity

of Asia, the challenges are sometimes similar, but often different. The task of securing India's future in this complex scenario of risks and challenges is ultimately ours. We will exercise our judgement, with responsibility and restraint, to meet our objective.

As I see it, Asia's collective peace and prosperity will be best secured only when nations on this continent develop common stakes and are no longer divided by narrow interests. And, common stakes can be developed only through close ties and friendly relations.

As the largest country in South Asia and the only one that shares borders with all other countries in the region, we are mindful of our special responsibility in taking the leadership in fostering cooperation. Indeed, India has consistently sought to build good neighbourly relations in the South Asian region. This is not only the policy of my Government, but is a reflection of our national consensus. We seek no undue favours, nor do we accept the right of others to seek unilateral advantages.

In pursuit of this approach, we have displayed a generosity of spirit that few countries can match. We have shown this in our dealings with all our neighbours. Again, this is as much a reflection of my Government's thinking as of our national genius.

All these have been an integral part of our approach to Pakistan, also. From the time of the Shimla Agreement—a generous agreement if ever there was one—we have sought to build friendly relations. Those of you, who were present when I last addressed the Asia Society in 1998, will recall my emphasizing India's faith in bilateral dialogue and accords in building peaceful relations with Pakistan.

In the spring of last year, I travelled to Lahore in search of a new quality of relations in the sub-continent and a new age of regional cooperation. That our initiative was not merely a gesture is reflected in the Lahore Declaration and the resumption of composite dialogue. The rulers of Pakistan responded through Kargil in the summer of 1999. The history

of that episode is well known. Pakistan suffered a military and diplomatic defeat. But instead of heeding international opinion, instead of responding to our offer to normalise relations, Pakistan responded by removing the last vestiges of democracy and embarking upon a yet more adventurous course of stepping up its terrorist campaign. The hijack of the Indian Airlines aircraft to Kandahar in the winter of last year, the massacre of 40 innocent Indians during the visit of President Clinton in March, the carnage that left more than 100 men, women and children dead and whose purpose was to scuttle the nascent peace talks in Kashmir, are part of the painful record of this cross-border terrorist campaign.

In the face of extreme provocation, we have shown patience and restraint. Unfortunately, Pakistan has misread our generosity of spirit and our desire for friendly relations as weakness. It has consciously opted to pursue the path of hostility by promoting terrorism in different parts of India.

The protagonists of this terror campaign are known to the world. The proliferation of practitioners of medieval religious extremism in our neighbourhood is only one of the factors that have contributed to cross-border terrorism. But they have provided a convenient cloak to disguise the aggression on our civil society——the cloak of *jihad*. This is nothing but an attempt by those who have adopted cross-border terrorism as an instrument of state policy to disown responsibility for their terrible crimes against humanity. We reject, and we call upon the international community to reject attempts to cloak cross-border terrorism as jihad.

We are a patient people and have persevered in the search for a peaceful settlement with Pakistan in the conviction that war is in nobody's interest. We have displayed patience and restraint in order to discharge our higher responsibilities towards the region.

We are determined to preserve and protect our national interests. None should doubt that India has the means and the will to protect her territorial integrity, secular unity and

communal harmony. We will continue to conduct ourselves in accordance with the great traditions bequeathed to us by our civilisational history in combating the terrorism and instability that is emanating from our neighbouring region.

Nevertheless, India remains committed to a composite dialogue process with her neighbour. But, for any meaningful dialogue, that country must demonstrate its commitment to existing bilateral agreements and abjure cross-border terrorism. Unfortunately, the current leadership of Pakistan has time and again publicly repudiated both the Shimla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration.

Terrorism poses as much a threat to all countries that subscribe to open society and democracy, as to India. In fact, many a country in the West, including the USA, is seized of this problem.

Huge amounts of narcotics that form the mainstay of terrorist funding are today finding their way into the USA and European countries. Some terrorist groups have sought sanctuary in the West.

Let there be no doubt that they will one day threaten the fabric of those very societies that have given them shelter today. Indeed, the USA is already facing this threat.

India has been in the forefront of campaigning for early adoption of the Comprehensive Convention Against Terrorism. We acknowledge with appreciation the USA's support on this front. We look forward to the Convention's adoption by the United Nations General Assembly.

When I addressed Asia Society in 1998, I had mentioned how India had raised, for five decades, her voice for universal verifiable nuclear disarmament. But not only was our voice disregarded, India's sovereign right to keep the nuclear option open was sought to be curtailed.

In the circumstances, we exercised our nuclear option. Our decision was as much influenced by national security concerns as to assert our objection to nuclear apartheid.

The multi-polar world of the 21st century necessitates a plural security order that accommodates and acknowledges the growing strength and confidence of emerging economic and security players. We believe that in the emerging multi-polar world, a plural security order alone can deal with the challenges of the new era.

Hence, our resolve to build a multipolar world where we have strategic space and autonomy in decision-making, instead of being subjected to the hypocrisy and hegemony of those who refuse to dismantle their nuclear stockpiles.

However, our decision to acquire credible minimum nuclear deterrent has not deflected us from our belief that peace between nations in this new century is best guaranteed by nuclear disarmament, and not nuclear deterrence. But there appears to be little inclination on part of nations that have acquired huge stockpiles and delivery systems to turn their swords into ploughshares.

Therefore, till such time weapons of mass destruction are dismantled, we will retain a credible minimum deterrent. Our experience has taught us that to defend peace, we have to be strong.

Above all, India's security, stability and prosperity are central to security, stability, democracy and prosperity in Asia. The security of a billion people will contribute to the security of Asia. Our strength and unity will be vital to the stability of Asia. Our prosperity will support prosperity in the region. And, the initiatives we take to uphold all that India values and symbolizes will not threaten, but strengthen, the future of others.

I also believe that those who share our vision of Asia must show in the policies they formulate that they recognize our stakes in the region and the full sweep of our security concerns. I cannot imagine that any future paradigms or arrangements for security in the region can be effective if it does not include India.

Friends, as a nuclear weapon state, we acknowledge the responsibilities that come attached with it. Indeed, India has proved to the world, in more ways than one, that it is a responsible state.

We have maintained our unilateral moratorium on further tests. We have scrupulously adhered to export controls, unlike some countries in Asia. We continue with our 'no first use' policy.

On CTBT, we have been involved in seeking a national consensus. However, pending the evolution of a national consensus on India signing the CTBT, my Government will not prevent the Treaty's entry into force.

We also believe that all other countries that must ratify CTBT under Article XIV of the Treaty, should do so without condition. My Government has agreed to participate in negotiations on a FMCT at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. All this demonstrates that India's genuine concern is to secure her national interests without in any manner affecting peace and stability in the region. If I may quote one of your Presidents, we believe that peace lies in strength. We believe that economic restrictions serve little purpose other than being irritants in bilateral relations. We feel, as do your policy makers, that India and the USA are natural allies. Given the potential of mutual benefit of close cooperation between India and the USA, it is for you to judge how far such restrictions serve our mutual interests.

Before I conclude, I would like to comment on what is perhaps the most significant development in India-US relations since I last had the opportunity to speak to you. President Clinton's visit to India was truly historic. It is my belief that when the history of India-US partnership is written, the six-month period between March and September 2000, beginning with President Clinton's visit to India and culminating with my return visit, will be seen as the defining moment. Two years ago, I had said that India and the USA are natural allies

in the quest for a better future for the world in the 21st century. This March, the two natural allies forged their common challenges and opportunities into a vision of cooperative endeavour.

That partnership is important, above all, for Asia. Our many shared values provide the foundation for it. Our many common interests in the region demand it from us.

In the world of the 21st century, in which Asia will be central to global stability and prosperity, our relationship will play an important role.

# A Collective Desire to Forge a Bright Future

IT IS APT that the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, which symbolizes the confluence of the developed and the developing worlds, should be jointly presided over by the leaders of two vibrant democracies, Finland and Namibia—one a developed country from Europe, the other, a developing country from Africa.

In your joint presidency, on which I congratulate you, you symbolize the partnership between diversity and the sharing of the fundamental values that lie at the core of the United Nations; indeed the very strength on which the United Nations must build itself in the new century.

This unique summit marks the formal entry of the United Nations into the 21st century and the new millennium. More importantly, it reflects the collective desire of peoples living

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Speech at the UN Millennium Summit, New York, 8 September 2000

in 189 countries spread across the world to forge a future free of the blemishes of the past.

A future that will guarantee equitable development of all nations East and West, North and South. A future that will guarantee freedom from want for nearly a quarter of the world's peoples living in abject poverty. A future that will guarantee freedom from fear of war among nations and conflicts within societies. And, a future in which nations will work together as equals for a new world order based on justice and equality.

Mr President, standing at the gates of an important epoch, at a point in our history that joins the past, the present and the future, we, the representatives of six billion people, must ensure that this Millennium Summit and the General Assembly Session that follows will transcend issues of narrow concerns

*Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee signing the Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism during UN Millennium Summit, New York, 8 September 2000*

and chart a new course for humanity. A course that will lead to enduring peace, development and security for all.

Let there be no doubt that the journey to our future, which we begin at the Millennium Summit, is over a very long and winding road. At every turn, we will be challenged by doubts. Overcoming that challenge and forging ahead will be the real test of the resolve that we voice at this Summit. In spite of human endeavour for peace, prosperity and cooperation among nations in the century gone by, the world is not free of conflict, often with terrible consequences. Much of this conflict is attributable to hostile aggression, lust for territory or, simply, hegemony.

But conflict is also born in failure of equitable development among and within nations. For long it has been established that poverty threatens peace and social cohesiveness within nations. It now needs to be recognized that the continuing poverty of some nations even while others prosper, not only taunts our conscience; it also threatens peace among nations. Poverty can neither be wished away, nor accepted as a reality beyond redemption. This affliction that strikes at the core of human dignity has to be cured through the collective will and effort of all nations, rich and poor. The century we have just left behind is littered with many a turning point in the history of humanity. The last 100 years were both the best of times and the worst of times. There were moments of utter despair and flashes of soaring hope.

In the 20th century we have seen colonialism peak and collapse. We have seen totalitarian and racist regimes rule with an iron fist, only to crumble in the face of assertive desire for liberty and human dignity. We have seen death and destruction caused by wars rekindle humankind's urge for lasting and durable peace.

It has been a century of contrasts. Giant strides in science and technology marking the conquest of new frontiers of

knowledge have helped us grow more food, produce life saving drugs and send satellites into space. Yet, millions still go hungry, die of easily curable diseases and are deprived of the enlightenment and empowerment that education ensures. The emergence of a global economy has led to undeniable benefits like faster growth, higher living standards and new opportunities. The rapid spread of Information technology, riding the crest of a Knowledge Revolution, has virtually led to the creation of a digital world where the click of a "mouse" can span vast distances in less than a fraction of a second. A "New Economy" drives the world today.

Yet, nearly a quarter of the people this Assembly represents have neither prospered nor gained from these developments. Often, they find themselves further marginalized and more vulnerable as development economics gives way to unbridled market economics and social objectives are erased by profit motives.

Mr President, globalization was supposed to deliver economic equality among all nations through free flow of goods, services and capital. The reality we see today is an asymmetry in the benefits from globalization between the developing and developed worlds. This asymmetry has further accentuated income disparities, thus increasing the scope of conflict and strife. If one in four of the world's people still live in severe poverty, there is something wrong somewhere in the manner in which we have been managing global development issues. The situation is made worse by the fact that developing countries with decreasing resources, both natural and financial, are finding it increasingly difficult to meet their social obligations. Therefore, removing economic inequality, both between and within nations, and ensuring that development does not suffer for want of funds, are two of the challenges that we have to collectively meet in the new century.

We also need to actively consider a fresh global initiative

to fight poverty. In a globalized economy, poverty eradication cannot be treated as the exclusive responsibility of individual nations. Therefore, a new global strategy against poverty is called for.

Even as poverty severely inhibits the socio-economic progress of developing countries, the alarming spread of HIV/AIDS drains their productive capacities. The co-relation between HIV incidence and poverty is too compelling to ignore.

It should be the concern of all humanity to generate the resources for concerted awareness campaigns for HIV prevention; for making preventive, palliative and curative drugs affordable; and, for the scientific quest for definitive prophylaxis and cure for the various strains of the dreaded virus. These tasks should not be allowed to add to the already onerous burden that developing countries are carrying today.

Another issue that should be of universal concern is the debt burden of many a developing nation. This burden grows yearly with new debts being contracted to pay off current interest charges. This results in a continual haemorrhage of wealth that further debilitates the developing world. The United Nations has a signal role to play in this global effort: by focusing attention on equitable development, by ensuring that development is not the preserve of a few.

In the last decade of the last century, we have seen a series of world conferences on various aspects of development—social development, women's issues, population and environment. We now look forward to the conference on financing for development.

Indeed, it is time that we looked at assurance of economic development, growth and distribution together in a high-level UN conference. And, we urge that development be made a cross cutting issue in the work of a reformed United Nations.

In the emerging world order of the 21st century, economic multi-polarity will be a critical factor. Globalization has given birth to an ever-expanding web of inter-dependent economies linked by trade and commerce, apart from unprecedented flow of capital across borders, backed by the Information Technology revolution.

But economic inter-dependence is best when it is based on the principle of non-discrimination. Only then can nations benefit equitably from global trade and commerce. To achieve this, and to ensure genuine economic multilateralism, the tendency of some to rely on non-tariff barriers to preserve markets and perpetuate current balance of trade should be resisted by all. This can be best guaranteed by ensuring, especially for developing countries, free access to markets and services through more transparent and predictable standards and requirements.

Mr President, global financial integration has encouraged an unregulated and volatile capital mobility across national boundaries and currency zones. This has exposed many developing countries to tremendous risks. Part of the problem is that we have moved towards an integrated international financial market without fully realising the potential turbulence which could result in weaker economies. Indeed, the 1990s are replete with financial crises striking developing countries and revealing the economically destabilising impact of an uncontrolled global flight of money on developing and transition economies. The resources of the International Monetary Fund should be augmented to deal with economic crisis created by the globalisation policy being pursued by member countries. Its role in anticipating major crises through improved disclosure standards and enhanced information systems also needs to be strengthened. This would be applicable equally to both developed and developing countries. The new century needs a new financial architecture to strengthen the role of multilateral institutions responsible for ensuring the stability of the international financial system. Multilateral

cooperation should focus more clearly on the need for better policy co-ordination among developed countries to avoid policy misalignment, which can have a destabilising effect on international capital movements. An inter-dependent world calls for greater participation by developing countries in the major forums of decision making. There is need to increase the share of developing countries in decision making in international forums dealing with the international financial system.

Mr President, we cannot have true development without peace between nations and democracy within them. Indeed, democracy and peace continue to remain the best guarantors for unhindered development—each secures the other.

The continued existence of nuclear weapons is a threat to global security in this new century, as in the century gone by which not only saw the development but also the tragic use of weapons of mass destruction. The international community has successfully diminished, if not entirely removed, the threat posed by chemical and biological weapons. But not so with nuclear weapons.

In fact, despite all the talk of nuclear disarmament from various forums, the stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, in the custody of those who were the first to build up such a deadly arsenal, remain virtually untouched. It would seem that we are still far away from achieving a goal that can assure the survival of humanity in the new millennium. India was forced to acquire these weapons in 1998 because the principal nuclear weapon states refused to accept the almost universal demand for nuclear disarmament. Moreover, the spread of nuclear weapons in our neighbourhood made us especially vulnerable.

Nevertheless, our policy is based on responsibility and restraint and we continue to press for universal, verifiable nuclear disarmament with undiminished commitment, even while safeguarding our strategic space and autonomy in

decision-making. International peace cannot be divorced from the need for equal and legitimate security for all. We support the Secretary-General's proposal for an international conference to address nuclear dangers.

In the interregnum, India continues with its voluntary moratorium on further underground nuclear test explosions. India remains committed to working for the successful conclusion of her security dialogue with key interlocutors on CTBT. I reiterate our position that we will not prevent the entry into force of CTBT. At the same time, all other countries which must ratify CTBT under Article XIV of the Treaty, should do so without condition.

India also remains committed to participate in negotiations on a Treaty that will prohibit the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We will participate in these discussions in good faith and in order to ensure a Treaty that is non-discriminatory and meets India's security imperatives.

Mr President, of the many other threats to peace, democracy and development, none has become as dangerous as international terrorism, with its links to religious extremism, drug trafficking and the commerce in illicit arms. Plural and open democracies are the target of the scourge of terrorism that strikes at the very root of tolerance, the mainstay of civil society in a free world.

For more than a decade now India has been a victim of cross-border terrorism that has claimed thousands of innocent lives. We have been fighting this crime against humanity with the weapons available to a responsible democracy. India calls for united global action against these dangers. We urge the international community to quickly adopt and implement the Comprehensive Convention Against Terrorism that will be negotiated at the UN General Assembly session that follows this Summit.

Many statesman-like words have been delivered from this high tribune. Unfortunately, some of them are an Orwellian

mockery. Those who have stifled democracy at home, speak of freedom from this forum. Those have engaged in the clandestine acquisition of nuclear weapons and delivery systems talk of ridding South Asia of these. Those who have repudiated solemn covenants talk of new agreements to prevent war. The authors of a vicious terrorist campaign that has claimed more than thirty thousand innocent lives in India, who actively sabotaged a historic peace initiative, are now offering new initiatives for dialogue.

The world must see the reality as it is. The acid test of sincerity of purpose is not words, but deeds. Terrorism and dialogue do not go together. We also urge the international community to act collectively against the indiscriminate proliferation of, and illegal trafficking in, small arms and light weapons. Countries should cooperate and work closely to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons by adopting an International Programme of Action of Agreed Measures. Mr President, because there can, by definition, be no equitable development without democracy, it is essential that the United Nations promote democratic norms. And the United Nations should do so not only by monitoring elections or by promoting standards of effective governance, but by example. The United Nations is a symbol of the aspirations of the peoples of the free world to achieve the noble objectives of peace, equality and honour. The UN Charter envisaged a balance between the three major inter-governmental organs of the United Nations—the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

Over the years, this balance has tilted rather heavily towards the Security Council. It is important that the central role of the General Assembly be respected; this Millennium Summit is a good first step, and we thank the Secretary-General for proposing it. We are glad that the Economic and Social Council has again become active in the promotion of development; we trust that the momentum will be maintained.

However, in a world in flux, it is understandable that the Security Council will continue to have a rather special role to play. It is, therefore, all the more necessary that it be made more representative of the large membership.

We hope this Millennium Summit will commit itself to an early expansion and reform of the Security Council, particularly bringing in new permanent members from developed and developing countries, so that it reflects the new realities of the 21st century. This will also strengthen this world body to function more purposefully in the services of all peoples who, as the UN Charter says, constitute the United Nations.

As member States will recall, India has let it be known for some years that we believe ourselves qualified by objective criteria for responsibilities of permanent membership. Indeed, as the world's largest democracy, enormous potential, a rapidly growing economic power and a major contributor to peace-keeping operations, India has a natural claim to a permanent seat in the Security Council.

Finally, Mr. President, at this rare moment of the Millennium, when we touch history, let us pledge to work towards bringing the vast human family closer together. Let us believe in spirit that our destiny is joined. I end with an ancient Indian invocation:

*Sarve bhavantu sukhinah*
*Sarve santu niramayah*
*Sarve bhadrani pasyantu*
*Ma kaschit dukha bhag bhavet!*

May all live happily
May all enjoy good health
May all see auspiciousness
May none experience distress
May peace prevail everywhere!

# USA—India's Largest Trading Partner

I AM HAPPY to be with all of you this morning for the US-India Business Summit.

I congratulate the CII for arranging—or, rather, re-arranging this event. I am sorry for the inconvenience caused to you because of the change in the date of this event.

I value this interaction with such a wide cross section of trade and industry. New York symbolizes the spirit of enterprise and innovation. It is this spirit that has driven the US economy with such distinction.

We have watched with admiration the longest period of economic boom in the United States. We have carefully assessed its impact on the global economy, including on our economy.

We are reinforced in our conviction that there is a natural synergy between our two societies in many spheres. This also includes the economic sphere.

What unites us is not only our common commitment to democracy, liberty, openness and pluralism. It is also a perspective on economic growth. A perspective in which private enterprise is given maximum encouragement by the State that limits its own role to that of a facilitator and impartial regulator.

For historical reasons, private enterprise in India was not assigned the desired role in the initial decades after Independence. Since the Nineties, we are correcting this situation by a comprehensive set of economic reforms.

My own Government is committed to further broaden, deepen and accelerate the process of reforms. We are convinced that this will unleash the full potential of economic growth and social development in India.

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Speech at the US-India Business Summit, New York, 13 September 2000

I am happy to note that the US Government and US enterprises have responded positively to the historic change being effected in the Indian economy.

The United States is today India's largest trading partner. The US companies are also the largest investors in India.

Most major US corporations, banks and financial institutions are present in India. We value their contribution to our economic growth.

Equally, I am sure, they value their business in India and the contribution that our expanding economy is making to their business profitability. We would like to deepen this relationship.

In the last ten years total approval for US investments to India is a mere 15 billion dollars. Actual flows are even smaller.

In the context of the new opportunities, we must dramatically alter this arithmetic. Let us accept a target of a 5 billion dollars of annual flow beginning next year and raise it to 15 billion dollars over the next three years.

This is ambitious. It is, however, achievable.

Let us also agree to at least double bilateral trade flows over the next three years. There is enough scope for that.

I realize that apart from motivating you, we also need to change. I am not unmindful that you often find our rules, regulations and procedures burdensome.

There is an image problem often described as "hassles of doing business in India". This is partly a communication problem.

The success stories do not circulate fast enough. One failure proves infectious.

Many approved projects are languishing. Assistance in project implementation is one area that needs to be strengthened.

I am, therefore, creating a Strategic Management Group

in the Prime Minister's Office where difficulties encountered by large investment projects will be speedily resolved. An Inter-Ministerial Team would assist this Cell. The Group would directly report to me once a month.

Many of the project problems concern State Governments. I would be urging the Chief Ministers to take a similar initiative. I am sure that this will impart some momentum and seriousness to address "implementational concerns".

Distinguished American businessmen, when you look at India, I urge you not to be overly influenced by the size of the present bilateral economic engagement between our two countries.

Rather, take a long-term view by looking at the magnitude of the opportunities and rewards as they will unfold in the future.

The interests of India and the United States are complementary. Let us harness this complementarity to the fullest.

India today is among the fastest growing economies of the world. Our annual growth of over six per cent in the Nineties makes us among the top ten fast growing economies in the world.

On our Independence Day this year, I have pledged my Government to a new target: The target of doubling our per capita income over the next decade.

This implies an annual GDP growth of nine per cent and more. This is a daunting target, but a target that India will achieve.

The reform process in India is on an irreversible course. Discussions and differences within the party and across parties are natural in a democratic polity.

Open public discussion fortifies national consensus. It mobilizes social support and protects reforms from uncertainties of political change.

We also want to alter the focal points of change. As a result of our efforts, reforms are being perceived less and less as being "elitist driven".

We are taking concrete measures to cushion the impact of change on the weaker sections of the society. The trickle down effect of growth is often slow. Which is why, we are consciously trying to harmonize faster economic growth with equitable development.

We are determined to ensure that the benefits of reforms do not bypass the common man.

We have strengthened the focus on agriculture and rural development. Areas like rural connectivity, safe drinking water, shelter and sanitation are being given higher priority.

We are paying far greater attention to the development of the social sector—especially primary health and primary education. We know that this is critical for the enrichment of India's vast human capital. This is also the most important resource in the emerging era of the Knowledge Economy.

As a result of our initiatives, the constituency for reform is rapidly enlarging.

My Government has created many new opportunities for private investment. Let me illustrate this:

A. There has been a massive deregulation to create investment opportunities in infrastructure.

B. We now have a world class Information Technology Policy. The IT and other knowledge-based enterprises offer the greatest opportunity for mutually beneficial partnership between Indian and American businesses. We have already seen many successes of this partnership. But this is just the beginning. The future is going to be immensely more attractive and fruitful.

C. India now has the professional manpower to truly maximize the benefit from the "New Economy". We are doubling the number of professionals from our educational

institutions in one year and tripling them in three years.

We shall encourage collaboration between Indian and American educational institutions for joint research and training. Further, private, NRI and foreign investment in education—especially in technical and higher education—will be promoted.

D. In the telecom sector there is total deregulation—

- On national long distance;
- On freedom to choose from own under-sea optical fibre cable;
- On basic telephony;

VSNL's monopoly on international long-distance telephony is being removed.

The Department of Telecommunications is being corporatized by 1st October.

A Telecom Convergence Bill is in the offing.

E. We are also considering how best to deregulate cellular telephony completely.

F. We are building thirteen thousand kilometres of new National Highway in seven years.

G. Ports are being corporatized and private participation in port building welcome.

H. There have been complaints about power projects in the past. We want to undo this. Power requires huge investment in India to meet our energy needs.

The de-politicization of tariff fixation and its acceptance by many State Governments create new opportunities. I expect several important commercial agreements to be signed even during my visit.

Several large power projects languishing for years should see financial closure over the next four to six months.

A new Electricity Bill 2000, which significantly deregulates the power sector, is on the anvil. It will enable much greater

consumer freedom. It will also enable private sector to take decisions on generation, transmission and distribution by unbundling them.

The regime for Direct Foreign Investment has now been made automatic. Sectoral caps are under constant review by a Group of Ministers. I expect further relaxations in many areas shortly.

I. Financial sector reforms are an area of high priority. Our financial institutions have adopted prudential norms consistent with international norms. Banking supervision follows the Basel guidelines. The disinvestment of Government equity in banks will be accelerated. This will further improve their competitive efficiency.

J. Disinvestment in general is receiving our close attention. We now have a credible disinvestment programme. During the course of this year there will be a significant disinvestment of some major companies covering the sectors of oil, telecom, airlines and hotels.

The resources realized would be mainly utilized to retire debt or meet social sector obligations. The Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment under my Chairmanship has been activated to achieve tangible results with definite milestones.

In sharing my thoughts on many of these issues I do not want to gloss over difficulties. Serious problems do exist in many areas, particularly long-term fiscal management.

While our tax rates are internationally competitive, tax administration needs significant improvement. Tax reforms also require urgent attention and the Double Taxation Treaty needs to be revisited.

Government expenditure needs to be pruned. Sustained action in this area is planned on the basis of the recommendations of the Expenditure Commission. The Fiscal Responsibility Act before Parliament would reinforce these measures.

State finances also need attention. The Finance Commission has made some important recommendations and it is my intention to pursue them with seriousness.

In short, there are enormous opportunities. There are, no doubt, problems and risks of investment. I, however, venture to suggest that the opportunities far outweigh the risks.

The opportunities and a conducive environment will grow. The problems and risks will ease.

The extraordinary achievement of Indian Americans in this country is sufficient testimony to the human resource of skill and enterprise available in India.

We also have:

- A widespread use of English language;
- A transparent legal system and rule of law;
- Respect for sanctity of contracts;
- And, above all, an unbroken record of fully honouring all international obligations.

India is poised for high all-round economic and social development. Today I seek your partnership in fostering this change—Partnership in participating in our prosperity.

Having recognized each other as "natural allies", India and the United States are poised to vastly strengthen and deepen our bilateral relations in the new century. Let us build a strong foundation of Indo–US economic relations to support the beautiful architecture of our natural alliance.

May I leave you with the words of our great poet Rabindranath Tagore who said:

"Once we dreamt that we were strangers, we woke up to find that we were dear to each other."

The Vision Statement signed between President Clinton and myself in March this year represents this new re-awakening. I seek your participation in realizing this common dream.

I thank you for the opportunity of sharing my thoughts with you.

# Vast Potential in Indo-US Relations

IT IS WITH a deep sense of honour that I speak to you today. I would like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, and the Members of the Congress for giving me this opportunity.

In November 1999 a remarkable event took place in the House of Representatives. By a vote of 396 to 4, the House adopted a Resolution congratulating India and my Government on the successful elections completed in October 1999. This display of broad-based bipartisan support for strengthening relations with India is heartening.

It is a source of encouragement to both President Clinton and to me, as we work together to infuse a new quality in our ties. I thank you for the near-unique approach that you have adopted towards my country.

Those of you who saw the warm response to President Clinton's speech to our Parliament in March this year will recognize that similar cross-party support exists in India as well for deeper engagement with the USA.

I am also deeply touched by the Resolution adopted in the House two days ago welcoming my visit and the prospect of closer Indo-US understanding. I am equally encouraged by the Resolution adopted by the Senate yesterday.

American people have shown that democracy and individual liberty provide the conditions in which knowledge progresses, science discovers, innovation occurs, enterprise thrives and, ultimately, people advance.

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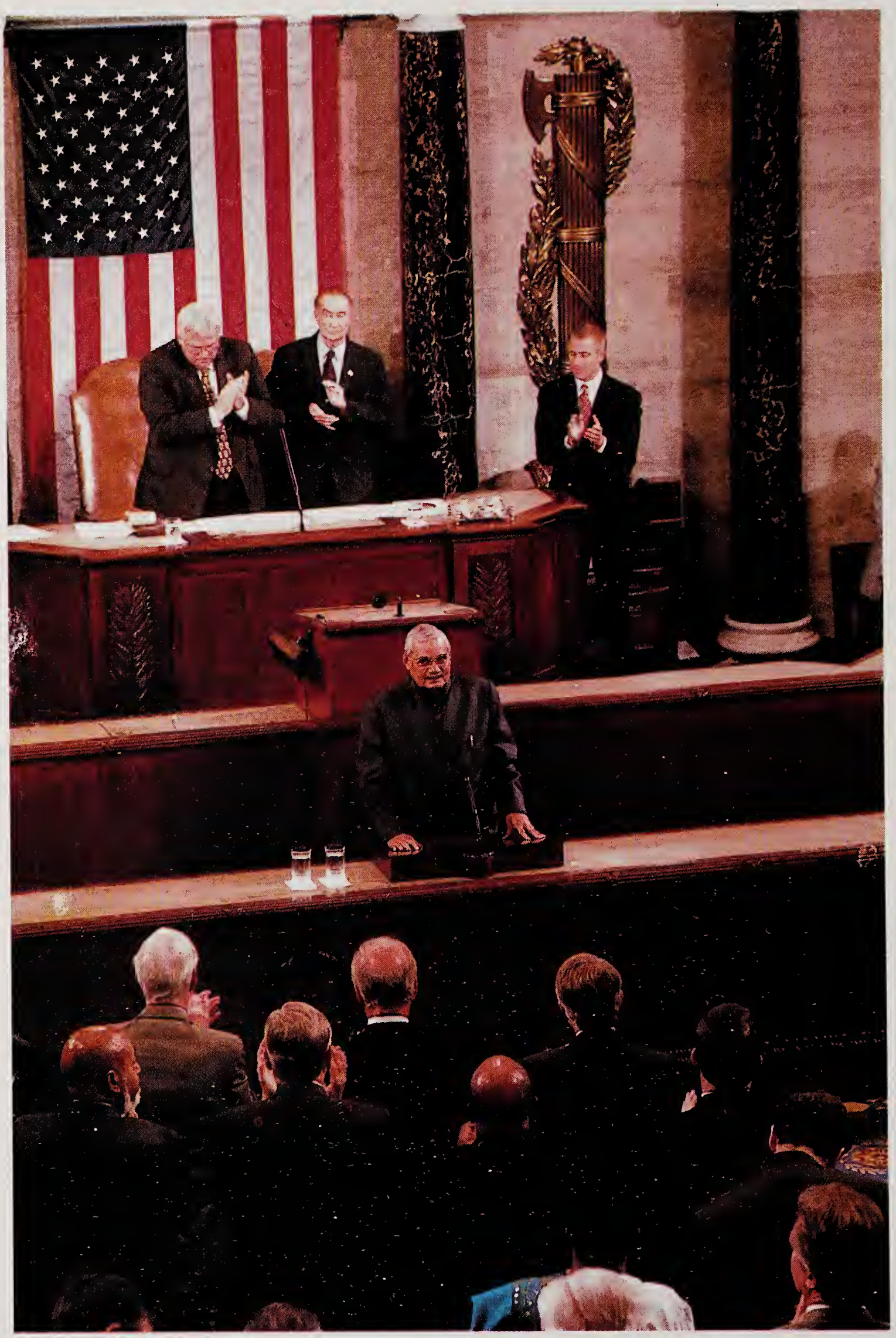
Speech at the Joint Session of the US Congress, Washington, 14 September 2000



*Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee receiving a standing ovation after his speech at the Joint Session of the US Congress, Washington, 14 September 2000*

To more than a million and half from my country, America is now home. In turn, their industry, enterprise and skills are contributing to the advancement of American society.

I see in the outstanding success of the Indian community in America, a metaphor of the vast potential that exists in Indo-US relations, of what we can achieve together.

Just as American experience has been a lesson in what people can achieve in a democratic framework, India has been the laboratory of a democratic process rising to meet the strongest challenges that can be flung at it.

In the half century of our independent existence, we have woven an exquisite tapestry. Out of diversity we have brought unity. The several languages of India speak with one voice under the roof of our Parliament.

In your remarkable experiment as a nation state, you have proven the same truth. Out of the huddled masses that you welcomed to your shores you have created a great nation.

For me the most gratifying of the many achievements of Indian democracy has been the change it has brought to the lives of the weak and the vulnerable.

To give just one figure, in recent years it has enabled more than a million women in small towns and distant villages to enter local elected councils and to decide on issues that touch upon their lives.

Two years ago, while much of Asia was convulsed by economic crises, India held its course.

In the last ten years, we have grown at 6.5 per cent a year: that puts India among the ten fastest growing economies of the world.

Economic activity gets more and more diversified by the year: President Clinton and many among the friends gathered here have had occasion to glimpse our advances in Information Technology.

We are determined to sustain the momentum of our economy: our aim is to double our per capita income in ten years—and that means we must grow at nine per cent a year.

To achieve this order of growth we have ushered in comprehensive reforms. We are committed to releasing the creative genius of our people, the entrepreneurial skills of the men and women of the country, of its scientists and craftsmen. At the same time, we in India, remain committed to the primacy of the State in fulfilling its social obligations to the deprived, the weak and the poor.

Important sectors of the country's infrastructure—power, insurance, banking, telecom—are being opened to private initiative, domestic and foreign. Trade barriers are being lowered.

There are forces outside our country that believe that they can use terror to unravel the territorial integrity of India. They wish to show that a multi-religious society cannot exist. They pursue a task in which they are doomed to fail.

No country has faced as ferocious an attack of terrorist violence as India has over the past two decades: 21,000 were killed by foreign sponsored terrorists in Punjab alone, 16,000 have been killed in Jammu and Kashmir.

As many of you here in the Congress have in recent hearings recognized a stark fact: no region is a greater source of terrorism than our neighbourhood.

Indeed, in our neighbourhood—in this the 21st century—religious war has not just been fashioned into, it has been proclaimed to be, an instrument of State policy.

Distance offers no insulation. It should not cause complacence. You know, and I know: such evil cannot succeed. But even in failing it could inflict untold suffering.

That is why the United States and India have begun to deepen their cooperation for combating terrorism. We must redouble these efforts.

There was a time when we were on the other side of each other's globes. Today, on every digital map, India and the United States are neighbours and partners.

India and the United States have taken the lead in shaping the Information Age. Over the last decade, this new technology has sustained American prosperity in a way that has challenged conventional wisdom on economic growth.

We are two nations blessed with extraordinary resources and talent. Measured in terms of the industries of tomorrow, we are together defining the partnerships of the future. However, our two countries have the potential to do more to shape the character of the global economy in this century.

We should turn the example of our own cooperation into a partnership that uses the possibilities of the new technologies for defining new ways of fighting poverty, illiteracy, hunger, disease and pollution.

Mr. Speaker, Ladies & Gentlemen, we believe that India and America can—and should—march hand in hand towards a world in which economic conditions improve for all.

A situation that provides comfortable living standards to one-third of the world's population, but condemns the remaining two-thirds to poverty and want, is unsustainable.

The foremost responsibility that the 21st century has cast on all of us is to change this unacceptable legacy of the past.

It should be our common endeavour to overcome this legacy. I, therefore, propose a comprehensive Global Dialogue on Development. We would be happy to offer New Delhi as the venue for this Dialogue.

In this Congress, you have often expressed concern about the future contours of Asia. Will it be an Asia that will be at peace with itself? Or will it be a continent, where countries seek to redraw boundaries and settle claims—historical or imaginary—through force ?

We seek an Asia where power does not threaten stability and security. We do not want the domination of some to crowd out the space for others. We must create an Asia where cooperative rather than aggressive assertion of national self-interests defines behaviour among nations.

If we want an Asia fashioned on such ideals—a democratic, prosperous, tolerant, pluralistic, stable Asia—if we want an Asia where our vital interests are secure, then it is necessary for us to re-examine old assumptions.

It is imperative for India and the United States to work together more closely in pursuit of those goals. In the years ahead, a strong, democratic and economically prosperous India, standing at the crossroads of all the major cultural and economic zones of Asia, will be an indispensable factor of stability in the region.

Our cooperation for peace and stability requires us to also define the principles of our own engagement. We must be prepared to accommodate our respective concerns.

We must have the mutual confidence to acknowledge our respective roles and complementary responsibilities in areas of vital importance to each of us.

Security issues have cast a shadow on our relationship. I believe this is unnecessary. We have much in common and no clash of interests.

We both share a commitment to ultimately eliminating nuclear weapons. We have both declared voluntary moratoriums on testing.

India understands your concerns. We do not wish to unravel your non-proliferation efforts. We wish you to understand our security concerns.

We are at a historic moment in our ties. As we embark on our common endeavour to build a new relationship, we must give practical shape to our shared belief that democracies can be friends, partners and allies.

In recent years, through all the good and difficult times, we have spoken to each other more often than we have ever done in the past. I thank President Clinton for his leadership and vision in steering this dialogue. I sincerely thank Members of this Congress for supporting and encouraging this process.

As we talk with candour, we open the doors to new possibilities and new areas of cooperation—in advancing democracy, in combating terrorism, in energy and environment, science and technology and in international peacekeeping. And, we are discovering that our shared values and common interests are leading us to seek a natural partnership of shared endeavours.

India and the United States have taken a decisive step away from the past. The dawn of the new century has marked a new beginning in our relations.

Let us work to fulfil the promise and the hope of today.

Let us remove the shadow of hesitation that lies between us and our joint vision.

Let us use the strength of all that we have in common to build together a future that we wish for ourselves and for the world that we live in.

# An Abiding Contribution to Indo-US Relations

I AM DELIGHTED to be here today to renew my friendship with some, to establish contact with others and to strike a dialogue with all.

Your Committee is at the cutting edge of the reach of the United States to the rest of the world. As a fellow parliamentarian, I am conscious of the need for a strong popular endorsement and backing for the foreign policy initiatives of government. You are the channel for the people's energy, endorsement or disapproval.

To the world of alliances, power politics, conflict and change, legislatures impart a ballast of morality, principles and ideals. It is not less important that you also control the purse strings of government. No taxation without representation is as relevant as no spending without authorization.

Members of the Committee, I salute your abiding contribution to the enrichment of Indo-US relations. Spanning different Administrations and times you have imparted to the relationship the stamp of continuity and predictability.

The challenges that confront us today have a strong moral dimension.

Afghanistan is an unfortunate example of a country processed into anarchy by outsiders. It has emerged as a world leader of terrorism, drugs and medieval bigotry that challenges civilized societies everywhere. As a neighbour, India is naturally concerned. As leading democracies USA and India must lead the effort to restore to Afghanistan a broad-based government.

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Speech at the meeting with the House of International Relations Committee, Washington, 14 September 2000

Regrettably, we in India are at the frontline of the fight against terrorism. The area on our west has become the epicenter of this criminal enterprise. It is not only India's fight but yours as well. Experience has shown that hatred can explode bombs in New Delhi with as much ease as in New York or Moscow. Let us work together to fight these dangers and not accommodate them.

What happened in Fiji was not only a criminal overthrow of an elected government but the resurrection of racism. Unless checked, such tendencies lead to ethnic cleansing and further conflict.

Let me also reaffirm that India will work closely with the USA to address issues of international security. Our nuclear policy is transparent and restrained. We have in place a unilateral moratorium on nuclear explosive tests and a policy of no first use. Let us remain engaged and work together to free the world of all weapons of mass destruction.

# Boosting Indo-US Relations

IT IS A great pleasure to be here with you today.

I would like to begin by thanking all of you. By promoting better Indo-US relations by focusing attention of the House on positive elements like growing trade and economic interaction, you have been friends in deed and friends in need.

The India Caucus is an outstanding example of participatory democracy. It serves as a bridge between the 1.5 million strong Indian American community and their elected representatives.

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Speech at the lunch with India Caucus, Washington, 14 September 2000

The Caucus took shape seven years ago with four members. I understand that today it has more than 120 members. This reflects both the growing confidence of the Indian American community and the increasingly close relationship between India and the US on wide-ranging issues.

We have noted with gratitude your support for India during last summer's intrusion by Pakistani Army regulars in India's Kargil sector. As we have your efforts to block certain amendments. We share your commitment to promote democracy and protest its demise at the hands of the military rulers.

Earlier today when I addressed the Joint Meeting of the US Congress, I began by recalling the adoption of the India Resolution by an overwhelming vote of 396 to 4, calling for the broadening of the Indo-US relations into a strategic partnership. That resolution's successful adoption owes much to Caucus members who co-sponsored it.

We believe that the challenge posed to open, plural and democratic societies by terrorism calls for concerted international action. We are greatly encouraged by the support extended by India Caucus members to our efforts in this regard. We know that we are not alone in voicing concern over and fighting the challenge of international terrorism.

Your support in expanding Indo-US economic and business relations also encourage us. India looks forward to American investors, industry and business to collaborate with their Indian counterparts in an environment that is conducive to growth, development and mutually enriching enterprise.

India and the US have much to gain from a close relationship between two natural allies. I am confident that the India Caucus will play a leading role in giving an impetus to the, this relationship, thus serving as a bridge between the peoples of our two great countries.

On behalf of the people of India and my colleagues in the democratically elected Parliament of India, I once again express my heart felt thanks to all of you.

# A New Vision in Indo-American Relationship

I AM DELIGHTED to have this opportunity to meet such a distinguished gathering of American scholars and thinkers. Through my many years of public life, I have known some of you personally, others through your writings.

That is why I say that this great wealth of American intellect, in Blair House today, is a tribute to India.

I am aware also of the unique role that the institutions that you represent play in the United States, particularly in the formulation of US foreign policy. My delegation and I welcome you most warmly on that account, too, and look forward to a stimulating evening.

India is a factor for stability, peace and growth in Asia. But not in Asia alone. The role that it will play, and the influence that it will have on international prosperity and security is, I believe, significant and that should engage the attention of foreign policy experts such as yourselves.

As for India and the United States of America, this March, President Clinton and I had the privilege of outlining a new vision for the future relationship between our two countries. It is a vision founded on our many shared values, but equally on our many converging and common interests in Asia and beyond. We jointly set a goal. That is yet to be attained. Both countries have still some distance to travel in fulfilling that vision.

For that we need to more clearly define the terms of our engagement. Non-proliferation and security related issues have cast a shadow on our relations. I have spoken on these matters

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Speech at a gathering of American scholars and thinkers, Washington, 14 September 2000

at the US Congress. Let me just say that we do not wish to undermine your non-proliferation efforts. We ask you in turn to understand our security concerns. We have held consultations with political parties on CTBT. These discussions will continue with a view to forging a national consensus.

I must share with you, in all candour, some concerns that have been articulated at these meetings. The public debate has placed mainly in the context of security-related developments in Asia, particularly the rapid pace of modernisation and expansion of nuclear forces in our neighbourhood.

There are concerns at the continuing cooperation for nuclear and missile technologies in our neighbourhood. Many of these concerns are based on assessments made in this country. You are familiar with these developments; you have examined their implications for American security.

About India and its neighbourhood: What is India's neighbourhood? Do not see India in a limited geographical context, or in the routinely delineated South Asian identity alone or only when you think of our western neighbour-Pakistan. Please recognise that India is but one hundred kilometers from Indonesia. Up till 1947, we had common borders with Iran, as indeed with Afghanistan, too. With Tibet and China we have our longest land border. These remain, amongst others, our geo-political determinants. I am, therefore, somewhat perplexed when "South Asia" is described as "a dangerous place", or "a nuclear flash point". I find in these phrases the echo of alarmist calls raised by our neighbour-Pakistan. But this amounts to paraphrasing what a former Prime Minister of UK had said, to supplying the "oxygen" of anxiety and publicity that terrorism needs. Do reflect whether your expressions, however well intentioned, not produce precisely the consequences that you seek to prevent.

I urge you, therefore, not to simply stick labels. Do distinguish between cause and effect, between the malaise and its symptoms.

The tensions that we are witnessing in our western region, focussed on Afghanistan and over spilling in all directions, are manifestations of the growth of extremism in our neighbourhood. This affects us directly. In fact, it is directed against us.

This extremism is the consequence of anyhow justifying an untenable ideology; of a variety of medieval malevolence founded on a perverse interpretation of faith. It is an attempt to establish a point, through violence, that a pluralist, secular, all inclusive and democratic society cannot exist in the region. And all this for a profoundly important reason: because it challenges the proclaimed basis of nationhood of some.

When we hear calls for "jehad" against India, when calls for the destruction and dismemberment of India are made and when international agreements like Shimla and Lahore are belittled, then the people of India wonder whether the problem lies in the valley of Kashmir or in this constant attempt to define nationhood in terms only of compulsive animosity towards India.

India is, of course, capable, and is determined, and we shall do everything it takes to preserve India-its integrity, stability and security.

We have faced this challenge in the past. It is not a geographical India whose undermining is desired. It is the values on which our society—and yours—is founded.

But be assured: We have the strength, the maturity and the understanding to act with restraint and responsibility. As we demonstrated when we were challenged in Kargil, or in Kandhar, or in the massacre of a hundred innocents on their way to a time honoured pilgrimage in the Valley of Kashmir.

But we have another responsibility, too. India has to address itself to the questions raised by my countrymen and women in the State of Jammu & Kashmir. This State is not any "core issue" of territorial contention; it is at the core of India's nationhood.

Like any other integral part of India Jammu & Kashmir must get the full benefits of India's democracy, secularism and economic growth. All these expectations have not been fulfilled in full measure. A variety of reasons explain this. Cross border terrorism and efforts to undermine every initiative that India takes is also part of that totality.

We made a beginning in that direction in July this year. Our initiatives were welcomed by the large collectivity of citizens in the region. This welcome held promise of expanding the "constituency of peace". The hope that was generated, in all of India, and most particularly in Jammu & Kashmir, was sacrificed at the altar of inhumanity—of killing of innocents.

But hope for peace can never be killed. That is why we remain undeterred in our efforts. I have said so in our Parliament and I reiterate-we will talk to all those who give up the path of violence and embrace the path of peace.

Our approach is clear. It is based on five fundamental propositions: One, religion or sword shall no longer be used to redefine boundaries. Two, this is the age of reconciliation not of conflict. Three, whether it is Jammu or Kashmir or Ladakh the citizens of J&K are tired of violence and bloodshed. Four, it is time to stop the bloodletting and time for healing wounds in Jammu & Kashmir. And fifth, India is prepared to heal the wounds by the larger power of *insaniyat*—of humanity.

In this time and age the irrefutable need is for regional cooperation. India understands and accepts its responsibility as the largest country of the region. We have demonstrated this in our completely free access agreements, for example, with Nepal and Bhutan. We have a Free Trade Agreement with Sri Lanka. We are improving our concessional arrangements with Bangladesh. Greater growth and prosperity through greater economic integration is our announced policy. This rising momentum of integration in our region often goes unnoticed, in a world that is preoccupied only with the contours of relations between India and its western neighbourhood. There

are other examples of cooperation: Like BIMSTEK or the recently announced Mekong-Ganga Partnership Initiative.

For us in India economic growth, human development and eradication of crippling poverty, are not only the most important goals; they are, simply, the only worthwhile goals. They are my bounden duty.

My government is committed to constantly deepening economic reforms and to improve the relevant policy frameworks. We have laid the foundation for achieving an annual economic growth rate of eight to nine per cent. We remain conscious of the need to distribute the benefits of this progress to the widest sections of the people. Our growth, the size of our economy, our participative institutions, and our strengths in the new frontier areas of knowledge-based industries, will benefit Asia, and in the fullness of time, the world.

In a world still working itself through the changes brought about by the end of the Cold War, an economically strong, democratic, pluralist India will share its wider responsibility and confront larger challenges.

The future contours of Asia are by no means settled or certain. There are many challenges to its future. It is a continent still striving to cement the various fault lines, not the least between democracy and other forms of government.

But above all, Asia faces risks from aggressive assertion of national interests, if necessary to the exclusion of the interests and concerns of others in and outside Asia.

Many of these questions, I believe, will have to be faced by India and the United States jointly. That is why I believe that the US and India will have to work together in joint endeavours for the pursuit of regional and international peace, stability and prosperity.

I now look forward very much to your views on these and other issues.

# Towards a Greater Indo-US Ties

MR. PRESIDENT, THANK you very much for the warm welcome accorded to me and the members of my delegation. We have covered some ground in our meeting a little earlier. Since your very successful visit in March this year, we have initiated several consultations and have established the forums that were envisioned in the Dialogue Architecture. I am glad that they have started their work. I take this opportunity to reiterate that we remain firmly committed to a closer relationship and stronger partnership between our two countries. Economic reforms in India will continue. Major initiatives have been taken. These, we believe, will create vast opportunities for US investment in India. Mr. President, we see great potential and opportunities for augmenting economic and commercial relations between our two countries.

We should, however, remove impediments to our economic and commercial ties. US Export Controls on supply of sensitive technologies to India prevent us from realizing the full potential of high technology commerce between our two countries. This is an emotive issue in India. We should address it.

Mr. President, India has great hunger for energy. As our economy expands, we will be one of the fastest growing consumers of energy in the world. Clean energy technologies, renewable energy and energy efficiency are important areas for our two countries to work together. I hope that we will get your full support in this area.

While focussing on the energy sector, we are equally conscious of protecting our environment. Our dependence on

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Speech at the delegation-level talks with President Clinton, Washington, 15 September 2000

domestic coal will continue. Can we not make this utilization of coal cleaner and more efficient.

Mr. President, we are aware of your commitment to the issue of climate change. We are prepared to work with you in addressing environmental and climate change issues.

India and the US have had a remarkable history of collaboration in the scientific field. I am glad that we have established the Science and Technology Forum. We hope progress can also be made in the field of hi-tech exports from the US to India in non-sensitive areas. Technology denial is of great concern to us. Increase in interface between our scientists and research & technical institutions would meet the interests of both sides.

We appreciate steps taken to remove some Indian organizations from the Entities List. It would be helpful if the remaining restrictions were also to be lifted.

Mr. President, I thank you for sending Mr. Gene Sperling to India last month. During his visit, the child labour issue

*Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee with US President Mr. Bill Clinton at White House, Washington, 15 September 2000*

and several other issues were satisfactorily resolved.

We have vital stakes in Asia-Pacific Region. Our security concerns are not confined to South Asia. Developments in any part of Asia have an immediate impact on our security, just as India's stability, prosperity and unity will strongly influence the future course events in Asia. We recognize the responsibility that the security environment in the region imposes on us. It should be clear that we harbour no aggressive intent against any country. In the geo-strategic context, we see a growing convergence of interest between the US and India. India and the United States should work closely for an Asia where our respective vital interests are ensured. In this context, we greatly welcome the Asian Security Dialogue.

Mr. President, we are confident that we can count on your understanding of our security concerns. We hope that your policies will support, not restrain or undermine, India's economic, scientific and technological development or its unity and territorial integrity. We, on our part, are prepared to address your concerns. I hope that we will be able to define clearly the terms of our growing engagement. We have to find a way forward to developing closer relations across the full range of bilateral activities.

We hope that we would also be able to revive the full scope of our defence cooperation with the United States.

Finally, I would like to compliment you, Mr. President, for your leadership in taking the United States on the path of rapid economic growth. I am aware that you have repeatedly proved the economists wrong. I wonder if they are now complaining!

Once again, Mr President, thank you for your hospitality and substantive talks. I look forward to meeting you and Mrs. Clinton again over dinner later in the week.

# Consolidate the Transformation in Indo-US Relations

LET ME, ON behalf of the Indian delegation, thank you for the warm welcome that we have received in the United States.

I also thank you, Mr. Vice President for your generous hospitality today, despite the responsibilities of your office and the obligations of your Campaign.

Five decades ago as we took our first steps into freedom, President Harry Truman had written in his message of congratulations, "I earnestly hope that our friendship will in the future, as in the past, continue to be expressed in close and fruitful co-operation in international undertakings and in cordiality in our relations with one another."

In October of 1949, India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had stated, "it was necessary, even desirable, and, perhaps, inevitable that India and the United States should know each other more and co-operate with each other more."

In March this year, President Clinton and I outlined the vision of a closer and qualitatively new relationship in the 21st century between the world's two largest democracies. This morning he and I reaffirmed that vision.

The foundation of our relationship is cast in our many shared values. It is reinforced by our many common aspirations. And, from what I have experienced over the past few days and yesterday at the Capitol Hill, this foundation rests on the broad support of the people of our two societies.

Today, Indians and Americans are driving innovation and defining partnerships in areas that will increasingly determine the process of wealth creation and global economic relations.

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Speech at the lunch by Vice-President of USA Mr. Al Gore, Washington, 15 September 2000

It is our common responsibility to show leadership and vision to foster an environment in which the natural skills and talent that Americans and Indians have for the digital world can thrive and prosper.

It is important not only for our economic future, but also because it gives the chance to find new ways of fighting hunger, disease, illiteracy and pollution.

As should have been natural to us all along, we have in the recent years expanded and deepened our co-operation in pursuit of our common vision of shaping a future of peace, prosperity, democracy, pluralism and freedom.

There are many people in India and the United States, who are devoting their resources, energy, expertise, foresight and insight to build a closer relationship and stronger partnership between India and the United States.

The transformation that we are witnessing in Indo-US relations is in many ways a tribute to their efforts and vision. The Indian-American community is an important part of the process.

It is up to us, the leaders of our two countries, to support and consolidate this process. I thank you Mr. Vice President for your contribution to the strengthening of our ties.

# Grasp New Business Opportunities in India

I AM HAPPY to participate in this business event organized by the National Association of Manufacturers and the Confederation of Indian Industry.

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Speech at the US-India Business Summit, Washington, 15 September 2000

My interaction with industry began in New York. It is in the fitness of things that it concludes in Washington. It comes towards the end of my visit to the United States. This interaction convinces me that there is great scope for economic partnership between India and the United States.

In March this year, President Clinton and I had signed a Vision Statement on Indo-US relations in New Delhi. That Statement had pledged to make a new beginning for India and the United States to realize the full potential of our relationship.

I came here to carry this process further. I came to explore the opportunities for realizing this full potential of our partnership.

The Joint Statement issued today reinforces this. It reflects the considerable progress made between the two countries even in a short period of six months.

Economic and business cooperation is the critical pillar of our relations. Business within and between nations is not only about market share and margins. It is prompted by mutuality fostered by partnership and realized through trust.

All commerce is an endeavour to enhance human comfort.

All investment is an investment to promote human happiness.

All development is about improving the quality of life.

Both for India and the United States this is the vision for any development process. Distinguished businessmen, you have a noble calling to realize this common vision

The continued US prosperity is almost a miracle. Your economic performance has evoked global admiration. It has also inspired India.

We are gratified that the Indo-Americans have made an important contribution in your economic success. Their significant achievements in Information Technology are a glowing chapter in the growth of the "New Economy".

Less well known than the stellar performance of the US economy is the story about the Indian economy. At an average GDP growth of 6.5 per cent a year, India in the Nineties has been among the ten fastest growing economies of the world.

We want to do even better in the decade that has just begun. We have pledged to double our per capita income in the next ten years. This implies a growth rate of around nine per cent.

Although it is a difficult challenge, India can achieve it. India will achieve it.

In the last decades of our development, we have built a strong and resilient India. But we have also drawn lessons for the future. We have re-thought about the respective roles of the State and the private sector for economic development.

The first point of change has been to free Government from providing private goods and services to use its resources to provide public goods. This has involved far reaching changes in fiscal, financial, social and institutional arrangements. While significant progress has been made, considerable work remains to be done.

Second—to create an environment where private initiative can flourish and where entrepreneurship and innovation are rewarded. That is why through progressive liberalization we are expanding business opportunities-both domestic and foreign.

Rules, procedures and policies which hinder private initiative are being changed or re-adapted. In the process, reforms have touched most areas of the economy—industry, infrastructure, international trade, foreign exchange market, financial system and taxation. Let me enumerate some of our important initiatives.

We shall complete a project to build thirteen thousand kilometres of improved and expanded National Highways by 2007. The first component of seven thousand kilometres, involving the four major metros, would be completed by 2003 itself.

A massive rural road connectivity programme is there to connect all the villages with populations of more than five hundred with all-weather roads by 2007. An accelerated programme is being worked out to connect villages with populations of more than one thousand by 2003.

The deregulation in the area of telecommunications is more or less complete.

- We have fully liberalized National, Long Distance, Basic Telephony and under-sea optical cable.
- We are considering how best to fully deregulate cellular telephony.
- The monopoly of the VSNL will end by nearly 2002.
- The new Telecom Convergence Bill is in the offing.

Our Internet Service Policy is about the most attractive anywhere in the world. We are placing emphasis on human resource development to support our IT Policy. We propose to dramatically increase the number of IT professionals in the next two or three years.

In this context, I applaud the initiative taken by a group of successful Indian-Americans to set up a Global Institute of Science and Technology in India in collaboration with University of California, Berkeley.

Financial sector reforms are being continued. New measures are being adopted to minimise the Non-Performing Assets.

- We have opened up the insurance sector. The Insurance Regulatory Authority informs me that the first batch of private licences will be issued by the first of October this year.
- The Reserve Bank is willing to consider further expansion of foreign private banks in India.
- Our tax rates are moderate and compare with the best you have anywhere in the world. We recognize that further tax

reforms are necessary. We have, therefore, decided to constitute a Tax Reforms Commission to lay down the roadmap of further tax reform and what is more, reform tax administration.

In the Joint Statement, we have decided to modify the Double Taxation Treaty so that on a reciprocal basis some of the present tax irritants on both sides can be eliminated.

A new Civil Aviation Policy is on the anvil. This would be based on the principle of making India an easier destination. It would not be driven by a mere bilateral consideration of trade-off in slot sharing. I am sure that this will enable American and other foreign airlines to bring more flights, and business, to India.

Disinvestment of Government's holding in Air India is well on course. The necessary advertisement will be issued within a fortnight's time.

Milestones have been determined for long-term lease of our five major international airports.

The corporatization of ports and private participation in port building is being aggressively encouraged.

We need to attract large investments in the power sector. We shall speed up reforms in this crucial sector, both at the Centre and in the States. We now have a regulatory framework that depoliticises the fixation of tariffs. This has been emulated by 14 State Governments. Financial institutions have worked out alternative arrangements that will enable them to lend more easily.

Yesterday we have signed four large power projects involving an investment of nearly 7 billion dollars. The next few months will see the financial closure of many power projects, which have been languishing for several years.

On Foreign Direct Investment, our policy is to make our climate more hospitable and competitive. The approval process for Foreign Direct Investment is more or less automatic for most types of investments.

Even last week, we have substantially relaxed sectoral caps in respect of a number of areas. We believe that India needs large flows of capital and technology to achieve the required growth targets. The thrust of our policy will be automaticity, transparency, simplicity, speed and removal of conditionalities.

The disinvestment and privatization programme of a large number of public corporations and selected utilities is moving ahead with full speed. Only a week ago, we have finalized definite milestone that will enable the privatization programme to cover many large undertakings.

We confront major challenges. There are many problems to be resolved. There are issues concerning fiscal rectitude. We are determined to ensure that the reforms benefit the average man. We have also resolved to address social concerns like rural connectivity, housing, drinking water, primary education and health. These will further expand the social base of prosperity in India.

Distinguished businessmen, Corporate America has reaped the rewards of a record ninth year of domestic economic expansion. Today, I invite you, captains of US industry, to grasp many new opportunities India offers. Your choice is diverse. It ranges from infrastructuring to manufacturing, from financial services to knowledge-based enterprises.

Let us forge a new economic partnership. A partnership reinforced by a common desire to derive material benefit.

I look forward to this US-India Business Summit heralding a new era of business relationship. And that will bring growth, prosperity and liberation from deprivation.

# Gandhiji—An Apostle of Peace

TODAY IS, INDEED, a memorable day for all of us. I have arrived here after unveiling a statue of Mahatma Gandhi in front of the Indian Embassy.

I am grateful to President Clinton for taking time out of his schedule to join me at the function. This extraordinary gesture, along with the glowing tributes he paid to the Mahatma in his opening remarks at the White House ceremony yesterday, have further endeared America and its President to our people.

With the unveiling of Gandhiji's statue in Washington, one of the greatest apostles of peace has, in a sense, arrived physically in the capital of the world's eldest democracy.

But the Mahatma's spirit has been with the people of America for the greater part of the last century.

Indeed, he was with you, not too far from here, 37 years ago. On that occasion, a quarter million Americans marched to Lincoln Memorial to hear Martin Luther King outline his dream of a truly emancipated America.

King's guiding light was Mahatma Gandhi. As he said:

"The Christian doctrine of love, operating through the Gandhian method of non-violence, was for me the most potent weapon available to the oppressed people in their struggle for freedom".

Gandhiji's unique method of passive resistance proved to be an enormously active force against colonial oppression.

His unique method of political resistance through the

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Speech while unveiling the statue of Mahatma Gandhi, Washington, 16 September 2000

passive means of non-cooperation, civil disobedience and non-violence touched the American people as much as it did people all over the world.

America's own struggle for independence had an important influence on India's freedom movement. Gandhiji has acknowledged that the great American philosopher Thoreau was his teacher in "the science of civil disobedience."

Gandhiji's personality had a magnetic effect on many people in this country. All of us know about the incomparable homage paid to him by Albert Einstein.

But not so well known is the effect he had on ordinary Americans. For example, Samuel Evans Stokes, a wealthy American from Philadelphia, gave up everything to become a soldier in the Mahatma's army of Satyagrahis in India.

He even changed his name to "Satyanand" Stokes and had the rare honour of being the only American to become a member of the All India Congress Committee.

His recent widely acclaimed biography, *American in Khadi,* shows how there has always been a natural affinity between India and America.

Friends, what is it about Gandhiji that makes him a man not just of the past, but equally of the present and the future?

What is it about him that makes him not just an Indian, but a man who belonged to the whole humanity?

The answer to these questions is obvious—The universality of the man. And the immortality of his message.

What is more, Gandhiji lived his own message. As he himself famously put it, "My life is my message".

It is the message of truth and non-violence.

Of brotherhood of all human beings.

Of cooperation among nations.

Equally, it is the message of tolerance and respect for diversity, which are the basic tenets of democracy.

Gandhiji saw both these tenets as the art and science of mobilising the physical, economic and spiritual resources of all sections of the people in the service of the common good.

It is the proud privilege of both India and the United States that our two countries are models—one in the East and the other in the West—of democracy as well as unity in diversity.

We both cherish, preserve and promote universal human rights such as freedom of speech, political choice and religious belief.

These are universal values that form the foundation of more tolerant and compassionate societies, a more non-violent world free from tensions and fear.

They form the foundation of a world where the liberty of people living in open societies is not threatened by extremism and terrorism.

These are values enshrined in the American and Indian Constitutions and handed down to us by great men like Abraham Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. It is not a coincidence that all three of them fell to the bullets of assassins.

Inspired by the Mahatma, we believe that non-violence requires faith in God and faith in man. Hence, we remain hopeful of a world where the conscience of humanity will never allow forces of bigotry and violence to succeed.

Gandhiji's statue here in the heart of Washington will be a symbol of the triumph of the human spirit against oppression, just as the Statue of Liberty in the New York has been the beacon of freedom, for the whole world.

Today is the penultimate day of my visit to this great country. It has been a very satisfying and fruitful visit.

I thank President Clinton for the enormous personal commitment he has brought to bear on the success of the Indo-American dialogue.

Just as his visit to India earlier this year was a memorable one for him, my own visit to America now has been equally momentous.

It has taken a very short time—from March to September—for our two countries to come a long way.

At the same time, it seems that New Delhi and Washington are not a long way off from each other.

I describe this period as "Six Months That Cemented the Natural Alliance Between India and America".

The Vision Document we signed in New Delhi has been translated into a specific forward movement in a number of areas in the Joint Statement adopted in Washington.

It reflects the synergy of our mutual interests.

We have laid a solid foundation for stronger and more broad-based economic cooperation between our two countries. I am confident that this foundation will support the attractive architecture of Indo-American relations in the coming years.

But going beyond the mutuality of economic opportunities, our two sides have talked candidly about several important issues that form the texture of our bilateral relations.

We have talked about security matters. We have talked about the situation in South Asia. We have also talked about threat of terrorism to civilized world order.

Of course, differences are bound to be there between the two countries. But dialogue between democracies, in an atmosphere of candour and trust, never fails to dissolve some if not all differences.

And that is what has happened on account of the continuing dialogue at various levels between our two democracies.

From divergence, we have moved to a convergence of thinking and outlook on a broad range of issues.

I heartily thank all those who have contributed to the success of this dialogue.

I especially applaud the consistent efforts of the India-American community. Your patience and hard work are paying off. Keep it up.

I thank all of you for the opportunity of sharing my thoughts with you.

# Strategic Partnership Between India and Russia

I AM EXTREMELY pleased to welcome President Putin to India. His first State visit is a milestone in Indo-Russian relations. It provides a major impetus to our bilateral relations at the beginning of the new millennium.

President Putin has an ambitious vision of a new Russia, and we wish him and his country well. As traditional friends, we wish to see Russia as a strong and confident state, an important constituent of a multi-polar world order.

The President and I signed the Declaration on Strategic Partnership between India and the Russian Federation. This is an important document, which sets out this shared aims and

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Speech at the Joint Press Conference on the occasion of the visit of the President of Russia Mr. Vladimir Putin, New Delhi, 3 October 2000

objectives of our two countries. We recognise the global role that our two countries have to play, and to build a better world for the 21st century. Copies of this document are available with you.

We have had a very substantive and meaningful discussion on the entire range of our ties. We exchanged views on a wide range of regional and international issues, noting the wide-ranging similarity of views based on mutuality of interests and shared perceptions.

Our discussions were held in the traditional atmosphere of warmth, mutual respect and understanding.

We have agreed on the importance of annual summits. President Putin has kindly extended to me an invitation to visit the Russian Federation at a mutually convenient time. I have accepted his invitation with pleasure.

We have noted that the level of bilateral trade does not correspond with the true potential. We have directed the Inter Governmental Commission to suggest new approaches and innovative ideas to expand and diversify our trade and economic co-operation.

To upgrade the nature of our defence interaction, we have agreed to establish an Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission on Military Technical Co-operation. It will be headed on our side by Raksha Mantri George Fernandes, and by Deputy Prime Minister Klebanov on the Russian side.

Our cooperation in the area of peaceful uses of atomic energy and space is proceeding satisfactorily.

We discussed the proposed expansion of the United Nations Security Council, keeping in view the present global realities in order to make it more representative, and to increase its effectiveness. We welcome Russia's unqualified support for India's candidature for a permanent membership of the UN Security Council.

The major challenges facing humankind in the new century are international terrorism, religious extremism, drug trafficking and trans-national crime. We recalled the Moscow Declaration on Protection of Interests of Pluralistic States of 1994, where both India and the Russian Federation reiterated their support for each other's territorial integrity as constituted by law and as enshrined in their respective Constitutions. We condemn the use of terrorism as an instrument of State policy.

I would like to wish President Putin and the members of his delegation a pleasant and memorable stay in India.

# A New Chapter in Indo-Russian Relations

I WOULD LIKE to thank President Putin for his stimulating and thought provoking speech. These thoughts should guide us as we build upon our strategic partnership in the 21st century. It is indeed a privilege to have President Putin in our midst today.

*Dobro pozhalavat!* Over two and a half centuries ago, Peter the Great had asked his Special Envoy Vice Admiral D. Wilster who had been sent to India to sign an agreement to "work as hard as possible in order to have fruitful commercial relations between the two sides".

Your Excellency, you are the inheritor of the legacy of Peter the Great and belong to the city that honours his memory. It is a city that withstood a siege of 900 days during the Second World War and gave the world a lesson in courage and endurance—qualities that the Russian people are justly famous for.

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Speech at the Special Joint Session of Parliament on the occasion of the visit of the President of Russia Mr. Vladimir Putin, New Delhi, 4 October 2000

We are confident that your first visit to India will open a new chapter in Indo-Russian relations. We see in you a good friend of India and hold you in high esteem.

As the words of Peter the Great show, our ties go back centuries. Though the centuries, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky have inspired generations of Indians. Similarly, the prose of Munshi Prem Chand and the cinematic skills of Raj Kapoor have found committed followers in Russia.

This is the cultural and historical legacy which we have to build upon, and give new meaning to, as we enter the 21st century.

We share common concerns and have common interests.

*Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee in rapt attention at the Special Joint Session of Parliament as the President of Russia Mr. Vladimir Putin speaks, New Delhi, 4 October 2000*

The history of the last five decades demonstrates that close Indo-Russian understanding is essential to peace and stability in Asia and the world.

This is what makes us strategic partners. Our friendship is not based on short-term calculations, but transcends the twists and turns of history and politics.

We are commemorating this year the 50th anniversary of the establishment of our Republic. We have reposed faith in the principles of democracy which are today universal ideals providing for the growth of the human being and society. Our democratic structures are rooted in the cardinal values of pluralism, secularism and tolerance.

Mr. President, not long ago, you had talked of the goodness of man in shaping relations in society and between states. This is what democracy is all about: empowering the people and releasing their creative energies.

India has embarked on an ambitious economic reform programme. We have had some success in our efforts at building a modern economy while ensuring distributive justice.

Along with the well-being of our people, we seek peace and security in our region and the world over. We have desired friendly and cooperative relations with the countries in our neighbourhood and beyond, based on mutual respect and civilized norms of behaviour. We intend to pursue this approach.

India has consistently striven for global disarmament and has been in the forefront of all international efforts in this direction.

We remain firmly committed to the creation of a nuclear weapons free world.

The continuous proliferation of nuclear weapons and missiles in our region has been of concern to us.

Mr. President, we have given formal shape to our relations by signing the Declaration on Strategic Partnership between

India and the Russian Federation. This Declaration will guide us in further developing our cooperation.

Your historic visit to India will help in the further cementing of these bonds.

It is of significance that the views of both India and the Russian Federation overlap and intersect on a wide range of international issues.

Our positions on these subjects are based on mutuality of interests and shared perceptions. As we move towards the development of a new world order that is based on the principles of multipolarity, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of others, I am confident that the strength of Indo-Russian relations will prevail in the creation of a global order which fosters international peace, security and stability.

In this regard, the reform of the United Nations system becomes vital. We welcome Russia's continued support to India's candidature for permanent membership in an expanded United Nations Security Council.

One of the major challenges which we, in this region, have faced over a decade is the menace of international terrorism, religious extremism, drug trafficking and narco-terrorism and separatism.

These dangers do not recognise any borders and affect all. Terrorism cannot be allowed to become an instrument of State policy. The international community should resolve to overcome these challenges through concerted efforts.

I take this opportunity to extend our greetings and best wishes to the people of the Great Russian Federation. I wish you, Mr. President, success in your endeavours in building a new Russia—a stable, democratic and confident Russia.

# People of Indian Origin—Ambassadors of India

IT GIVES ME great pleasure to join you for the inauguration of this International Convention of Global Organization of People of Indian Origin. Many of you have travelled great distances to attend this conference. In a sense, this is also a homecoming for you.

Today, there are nearly twenty million people of Indian origin living in almost every corner of the world. Rare is the country where you will not come across people of Indian origin. They have adopted foreign shores as their own. But neither the passage of time nor the distance between their ancestral land and their new homes has been able to sever the umbilical cord between Mother India and her children abroad.

You are as much the inheritors of India's rich civilizational heritage as your brothers and sisters back home in India. And, we are proud that you have kept alive your distinct cultural identity even while making a place for yourselves in a foreign social and cultural milieu.

We are equally proud of the fact that people of Indian origin, wherever they may be living, have greatly enriched the society, economy and culture of their adopted countries. The success stories of Indian entrepreneurs abroad are legendary. From hi-tech chip laboratories to curry restaurants, from renowned hospitals to famous educational institutions, from well-known research centres to leading think-tanks—everywhere you will find an Indian who has overcome all odds to establish himself through skill, dedication and hard work.

Your adopted countries have benefited from your unique

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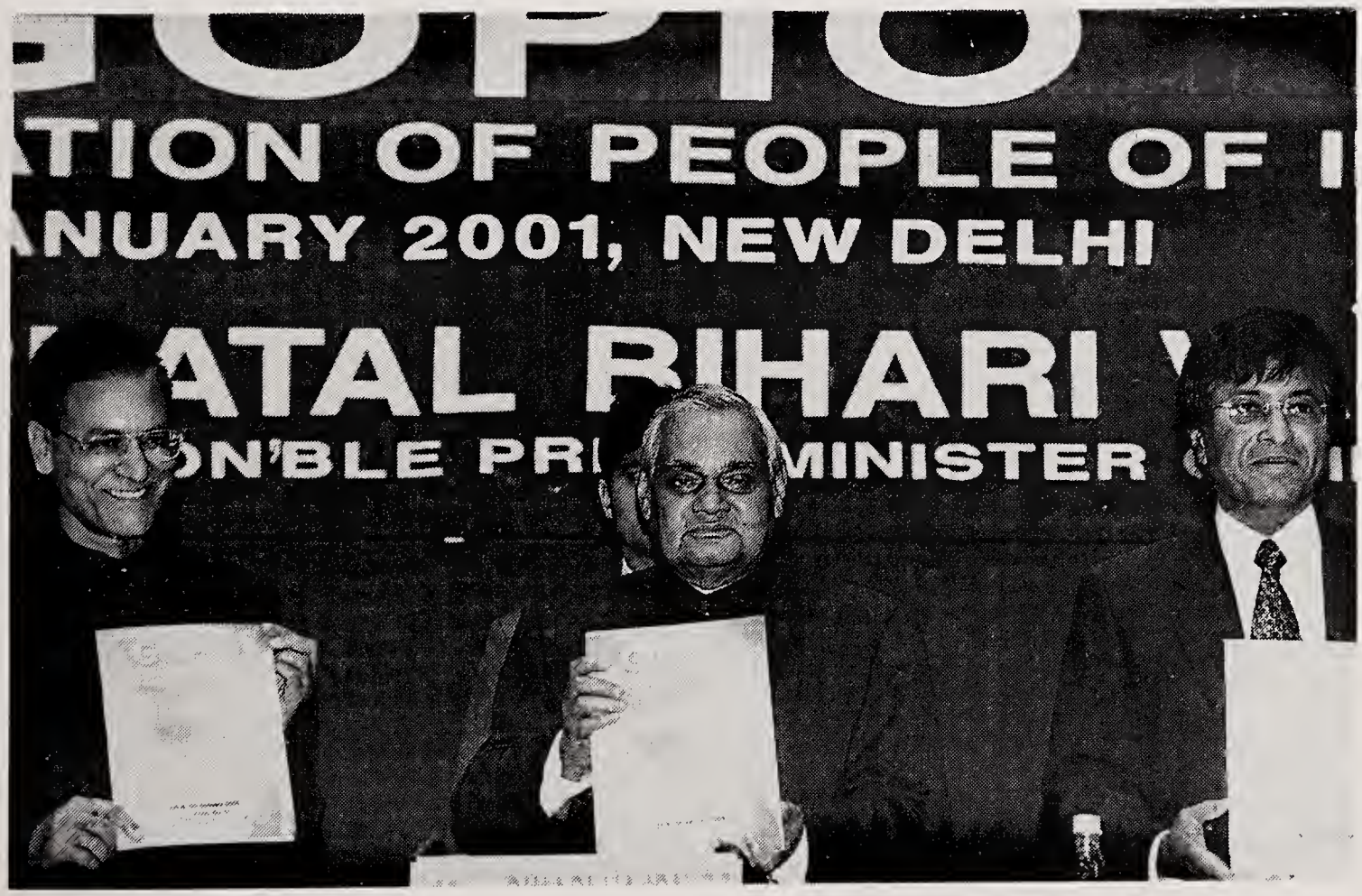
Speech while inaugurating the International Convention of the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin, New Delhi, 6 January 2001

contributions to their social and economic transformation. You have also contributed towards enhancing awareness about India's past history, present reality and future potential.

Indeed, from the sweat and tears of indentured Indian labour toiling on colonial sugar and tea plantations in the 19th century to the intellectual achievements of the Indian software community in the Silicon Valley of the 21st century, the odyssey of the Indian community at large is a reflection of the potential of our people and the magnitude of their contribution towards global prosperity.

The Indian diaspora's contributions are not merely confined to the culture and economy of their adopted countries. Despite their numerical disadvantage, the Indian communities living abroad have made deep impressions on the political processes of their adopted countries.

The active participation of people from India in the




*Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee releasing a souvenir on the occasion of International Convention of Global Organization of People of Indian Origin, New Delhi, 6 January 2001*

nationalist movement in Africa as early as the beginning of the 20th century is well documented. Mahatma Gandhi's baptism in mass politics was in South Africa. His joining the struggle against racial injustice and discrimination was an event that proved to be a turning point in history—not only in South Africa but also in India.

India's struggle for independence was greatly strengthened by the substantial support of overseas Indian communities. The India League in the UK and the Gadar Party in the USA played an important role in mobilizing support for our struggle for independence. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and his INA received the unstinting support of Indians living in South-East Asian countries.

Between then and now, the Indian community living abroad has come to play a determining role in the politics of their adopted countries, not only as leaders of the Indian diaspora, but also as leaders in the truest sense of the term. I recall that the Commonwealth Heads of Government Summit at Durban in 1999 was attended by as many as five heads of state or heads of Government who are of Indian origin.

However, in this impressive success story, a blemish has recently crept in. We have watched with distress the overthrow of a democratically elected Government in Fiji and a series of subsequent actions that have hit at the people of Indian origin in that country and more particularly the poorer among them. The Indian diaspora abroad has an important role in mobilising public concern the world over at the events in Fiji and in seeking nothing less than a restoration in that country of due constitutional processes as enshrined in the 1997 Constitution.

Friends, I have often come across people of Indian origin who are eager to participate in India's nation-building efforts—as a tribute to the country of their origin, as a means of

strengthening the bonds of love and affection that exists between them and India. The cooperation and valuable support extended by people of Indian origin and non-resident Indians during the last decade of economic liberalization and structural reforms have greatly encouraged us and contributed to the birth of resurgent India.

Today, India stands on the threshold of a technological revolution in many areas that define the "New Economy" of the 21st century: information technology, biotechnology, agriculture, space and energy. The Indian diaspora has made seminal contributions to the development of many of these sectors in their adopted countries. They can now play a vital role by making a similar contribution to India in these sectors. Let me give an example: We aspire to make India a knowledge super power by the year 2010: you can help us fulfil this aspiration.

Many of you owe your current success to the quality education which you have received in Government run institutions, be they Indian Institutes of Technology or medical colleges. You now owe it to your motherland to associate yourselves with India's search for rapid and enduring social change and economic progress.

I would like to emphasize that we do not merely seek investment and asset transfer. What we seek is a broader relationship—in fact, a partnership among all children of Mother India so that our country can emerge as a major global player. We value the role of people of Indian origin as unofficial ambassadors providing a link between India and the rest of the world.

My Government's policy is to assist the overseas Indian community in maintaining its cultural identity and strengthening the emotional, cultural and spiritual bonds that bind them to the country of their origin. We will provide all help to the overseas Indians in maintaining their cultural

identity even while encouraging their political commitment to their adopted countries.

With this objective in mind, we have constituted a high level committee on the Indian Diaspora, headed by Shri L. M. Singhvi. This Committee has been tasked to study the expectations of overseas Indians from India. It will study the role that people of Indian origin and non-resident Indians can play in the economic, social and technological progress of India. It will examine the current regime that governs your travel and stay in India as well as your investment in the Indian economy. It will recommend measures to resolve the problems faced by you.

More fundamentally, the Committee has been asked to review the status of people of Indian origin and non-resident Indians in the context of the constitutional provisions, laws and rules applicable to them both in India and the countries of their residence.

These will go a long way in developing a strong, and mutually beneficial relationship between India and the Indian diaspora.

Friends, the underpinnings of our civilisational history and cultural heritage have been the tradition of tolerance, openness to new ideas, respect for ancient wisdom, intellectual pursuit and abhorrence of violence. The people of Indian origin and non-resident Indians are a living testimony to the noble tradition of blending the old with the new.

With these words, I am pleased to inaugurate this International Convention of the Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin.

# Look to the East

IT GIVES ME great pleasure to pay official visits to Vietnam and Indonesia. India has enjoyed traditionally close and friendly relations with both these countries. These relations are rooted in the strong civilisational and cultural linkages between India and south-East Asia, going back thousands of years. We are also closely cooperating with them in international and regional fora, including ASEAN. My visit, which is a part of India's "Look to the East" policy, would reaffirm the closeness of our relations at the highest political level. Some agreements are also expected to be signed there to infuse new content into Indians ties with Vietnam and Indonesia.

In Hanoi, we will discuss a range of bilateral and global issues of mutual concern with the leaders of Vietnam. During the visit of President Tran Duc Luong to India in December, 1999, we had held wide ranging discussions. Recently, the External Affairs Minister had visited Vietnam for the meeting of the 10th Joint Commission. There have been other visits also and these indicate a continuity of our relations in different areas. Vietnam and India are members of the new initiative of Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, which also includes Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand. These countries have close cultural affinities and the cooperation in the areas of tourism and other activities would strengthen these linkages for the benefit of our peoples.

President Abdurrahman Wahid of Indonesia had visited India in February 2000. The visit provided an opportunity to renew our relations and exchange views on the emerging developments in our region. Indonesia is a close neighbour of ours separated by less than a 100 km stretch of sea. During my visit to Jakarta, I would continue the process of dialogue

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Statement before leaving for Vietnam and Indonesia, New Delhi, 7 January 2001

initiated during President Wahid's visit. I would also visit the island of Bali in Indonesia.

I carry with me the best wishes of the people of India for the continued progress and prosperity of the peoples of Vietnam and Indonesia.

# Enhancing South-South Cooperation

I AM PLEASED to be here in Hanoi, the capital of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, on my first visit to this great country. This visit takes place in the context of the traditionally warm friendship between India and Vietnam, which dates back to the first millennium. Vietnam's Cham temples and other monuments are symbols of the proud common heritage we share.

I have had very good discussions with Vietnamese leaders. At the delegation level talks, Prime Minister Phan Van Khai and I reviewed our bilateral and multilateral cooperation and discussed measures to promote it further. Issues of common concern were discussed in an atmosphere of trust and mutual understanding that has come to mark our relations.

Our officials have just signed agreements in the fields of Cultural Exchanges, Peaceful use of Nuclear Energy and Tourism. Memoranda of Understanding are being signed between our business representatives at the JBC. The India-Vietnam JBC will be discussing tomorrow many business related issues of concern to both sides.

India's technical cooperation programme with Vietnam is

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Statement to the Press, Hanoi, 8 January 2001

a token of the special and friendly feelings of the Indian people for the people of Vietnam. I am confident that this programme will be deepened and broadened in the coming years.

India will always remain ready to share its expertise and experience in information technology in which it has come to be recognised as one of the world leaders. We had, during President Tran Duc Luong's visit, offered a credit of US $ 5 million to set up two centres for software and human resource development in Vietnam. We have now added to this a grant of Rs.100 million, for setting up a Software and Training Centre in Vietnam.

South-South cooperation requires that we should have a close partnership with Vietnam in its endeavour towards self-reliant national development. Science and Technology, including frontier sciences, are the backbone of a modernizing society and India is pleased to assist Vietnam in this direction. A team of Indian scientists have just installed a tidal gauge for measuring sea level variations at Quy Nhon, which I am told is working satisfactorily. I am also glad that cooperation in the area of peaceful uses of nuclear energy is progressing well. We have offered to Vietnam assistance in the form of equipment for a nuclear science laboratory in Dalat.

Vietnam is moving fast in its economic reforms and presents many attractive opportunities for Indian investors. At the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry, I will have the pleasure tomorrow of unveiling a plaque of a leading Indian company which will be investing in the pharmaceutical sector. We hope this important development will help improve the quality of health of ordinary people in Vietnam, while also contributing to its economy.

ASEAN has always been very close to us in terms of history, geography and cultural association. The Mekong-Ganga Cooperation Programme, India's dialogue partnership with ASEAN and our ARF partnership all underline our linkages. We would like to see these linkages flourish in the future in the interest of our collective security and prosperity.

I take this opportunity to once again express the appreciation and gratitude of the people of India to our friends in Vietnam, for their support of India's candidature for permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council and on various issues that command the attention of the international community. We look forward to both our countries continuing to work together in international bodies specially in ASEAN fora.

# Revitalizing Indo-Vietnam Ties

I HAVE LONG wanted to visit your beautiful country and I am grateful that I have had this opportunity.

We deeply appreciate the warmth of the reception and hospitality that the government and the people of Vietnam have extended to me an to my delegation.

Excellency, I come from a political generation in India, which was closely identified with Vietnam's struggle. What energized India's liberation movement, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and Vietnam's epic battle for independence and re-unification under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, was the same universal ideal—namely, freedom from alien rule and exploitation.

My generation was consumed by the cause of Vietnam. We took it to the UN, the Non-aligned Movement and other international fora unmindful of the consequences or the political costs of such actions.

I still vividly recall the expression of spontaneous joy

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Speech at the banquet hosted in his honour, Hanoi, 8 January 2001

which overflowed onto the streets of Indian cities on that memorable day in April, over 25 years ago, when Vietnamese troops entered Saigon to complete the liberation of South Vietnam from foreign occupation.

All this is now history. A stirring history, but still it is the past. We are full of admiration for Vietnam's rapid strides towards a bright future.

Optimism is a distinctive quality of the personality of the Vietnamese people. As a poet and a lover of poetry, I am reminded of the words of Nguyen Trai, the great 15th century poet who foresaw the tribulations and triumphs of the future:

*From now on our land is safe*
*Rivers and mountains will see a new era*
*Calm comes after the storm,*
*Light has driven away darkness*
*Both Heaven and our ancestors helped us in battle;*
*We took up arms, fought, and won.*
*All the four seas are now serene, great changes are forthcoming;*
*Let everybody everywhere be so informed.*

After five centuries the same optimism was expressed by another Vietnamese poet-statesman in a poem called "Good Days Are Coming":

*Everything changes, the wheel*
*Of the law turns without pause.*
*In the wink of an eye*
*The Universe throws off its muddy clothes*
*After sorrow comes happiness.*

That poet statesman was none other than Ho Chi Minh.

Today, the international political situation has changed. A globalizing world and the information technology revolution have transformed the world economic scene. Building on the history of traditional friendship, invoking the strong affections born from our common struggle against foreign oppression,

India and Vietnam should today renew and revitalize our bilateral relations in consonance with current realities. The common goal today is rapid economic progress for all our peoples, with social justice.

We in India applaud the socio-economic achievements of your economic renovation programme in Vietnam. We offer our fullest cooperation in your effort to strengthen your economy and accelerate your growth rate. We also have achieved a sustained growth rate of over 6 per cent over the last few years. We have made significant breakthroughs in areas as diverse as computer software and space technology.

Excellency, what our two countries need to do is to identify and exploit more fully the synergies that our new conditions have created. Unfortunately, it often happens with developing countries that they under estimate the technological progress achieved by their fellow developing countries and turn automatically to the developed world for products, services and assistance. India and Vietnam should not fall into this trap.

We have much to offer each other, more economically, and with more appropriate technologies. We should dispel the awareness gap that seems to exist in the business community and even among the government officials in each country about the capabilities and successes of the other.

Besides the tremendous promise for our bilateral cooperation, our two countries have common regional interest both in ASEAN and in the recently announced Mekong-Ganga Co-operation Programme. We recognise the challenges to the security of Asia stemming from terrorism, religious extremism and subversive and separatist activities. With Vietnam in the chair, we look forward to strengthening our bonds with ASEAN.

India appreciates the consistent support that Vietnam has extended to us on issues of mutual concern at international fora. We share a common determination to strengthen the Non-aligned movement. We also share a similarity of views on the need to reform and strengthen the UN and its Security Council.

And so, Ladies and Gentlemen, with strong political commitment and economic pragmatism, the peoples and governments of India and Vietnam should continue to consolidate and strengthen relations. History and Geography, have willed us to become strategic partners in the new century to promote peace, stability, security and sustainable cooperation among countries in Asia.

Excellency, I thank you and the entire leadership of Vietnam, for your contribution to the strengthening of our ties.

# A Friendship of Shared Values

I AM DELIGHTED to meet this distinguished gathering of Vietnamese scholars, thinkers and academics.

The world has just entered the 21st century and a new millennium. We have left behind us a century of great change and tumultuous development; a century marked by terrible wars; and, a century that saw the collapse of imperialism and colonialism.

It was a century that saw the liberation of millions of people across the world; a century that saw the re-unification of people divided by artificial barriers that were erected as part of the Cold War.

Among those who fought and won their freedom from foreign masters are the people of India and Vietnam. Indeed, much of that which occurred in the last century happened in Asia.

In many ways it was a new awakening of ancient

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Speech at a gathering of Vietnamese intellectuals, Hanoi, 9 January 2001

civilisations reborn as modern national states. Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and President Ho Chi Minh led our peoples in the heroic struggle against colonialism. They articulated, through speech and action, our common Asian heritage which, while emphasising peace, harmony and tranquillity, exhorts society to stand up for freedom against oppression and discrimination of any kind.

Relations between India and Vietnam date back many centuries. In ancient times, travellers from India ventured across high seas to reach the southern shores of your beautiful country. Probably they had plans to return to India, but obviously they were charmed by the grace and hospitality of the people of Vietnam as those travellers never returned to India. Instead, they planted the seed of friendship which has weathered the storm of imperialism and colonialism and remained firm for centuries.

As a result, we see today a similarity of philosophical thought, beliefs and social attitudes. Ours is a friendship based on shared values and common interests, a friendship strengthened by multi-faceted cooperation in education and culture, trade and economy and science and technology.

Asia is yet to stabilize its faultlines and reconcile past differences with future inter-dependence. Asia faces risks from aggressive assertion of interests and claims. To overcome these challenges, Asia needs to develop common stakes.

India's dialogue with ASEAN and participation in BIMSTEC, as well as the Mekong-Ganga civilisational cooperation initiative, will strengthen this further. India is willing to cooperate with all Asian nations for economic growth, human development and eradication of poverty.

These are some of the areas of convergence or intersections in the outlook of both India and Vietnam. What we hope to hear from the scholars here are ideas on enhancing our bilateral relationship and making it more relevant for the new century.

I look forward to discussing these and other issues during our interaction.

# Age-old Ties with Jakarta

IT GIVES ME immense pleasure to be in Indonesia. I am deeply touched by the warmth of the reception that you have accorded me and my delegation. The Indian people reciprocate the affectionate sentiments which you have expressed. I also bring you cordial Id greetings and best wishes for the Millennium from the people of India.

Excellency, our two countries enjoy a close proximity not only in a literal sense, but also in a more profound sense. We share a maritime boundary with less than 100 kilometres separating our island of Nicobar from northern Sumatra. A cross pollination of civilisations and cultures has bequeathed us a unique shared heritage.

We have also shared many of the concerns, which dominated the political consciousness of developing countries for much of the last half century. It was from the soil of Indonesia that the Bandung Declaration of 1955 articulated the solidarity of the developing world against imperialism, colonialism and racism. The Non-Aligned Movement was the child of the Bandung consensus. The major success of the Non-aligned Movement lies in the protection of the sovereignty of the newly independent countries.

This struggle of the developing world must go on, with priority to economic and social development. The 20th century may have settled the major political contradictions which emerged from the Second World War. But the end of Cold War has brought to the forefront new economic dilemmas.

The problems of poverty and unemployment continue to deny economic freedom to a large number of our peoples. Globalization and the information revolution have eroded national boundaries and postulated an economic liberalisation

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Speech at the banquet hosted in his honour, Jakarta, 10 January 2001

with the promise of rapid economic growth. The challenge before developing countries is to minimize the socio-economic disparities caused by this process in the short term. We must work together, along with other developing countries, to impart to the globalization process a more human face and a more compassionate pace.

We also have to join hands in protecting the security of our people. Terrorism, fuelled by religious extremism and financed by drug smuggling and gun-running, threatens the very fabric of democratic societies like ours. Both you and we take pride in our ethnic, religious and linguistic pluralism. We have to constantly oppose external interference and subversive and separatist forces which seek to upset this equilibrium. The stability, security and prosperity of Indonesia is important for our region. India has always supported, and will continue to support, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Indonesia.

Excellency, we have heard with interest your call for rediscovering the Asian identity. We have also watched with admiration the flowering of popular democracy in Indonesia. The process of political reform and economic reorganization often require dismantling of entrenched institutions and habits of thought which have outlived their utility. As we in India see, even today, this is not always easy. Your emphasis on reconciliation has contributed significantly to Indonesia's success.

The strength and resilience which Indonesia displayed while restoring its economy after the so-called "Asian crisis" was truly remarkable. We applaud your efforts and assure you of our fullest support for your reform process.

We had the honour of receiving Your Excellency in India in February last year. During your visit, we discussed measures to strengthen our relationship and to tap its unrealized potential. We had agreed that a regular exchange of high level visits between our two countries would impart fresh impetus to this goal. My visit is to promote that objective. We hope to transform our age-old traditional ties of friendship into a partnership of

sustained relevance in this globalizing world and technological age.

I have already outlined some of the political priorities which should occupy our bilateral agenda. Economic goals would have an equally weighty presence on that agenda. Our present levels of trade do not do justice to the possibilities. Investments in both countries have barely scratched the surface. Specialized areas like Information Technology, computer software, biotechnology, financial management and space technology provide excellent opportunities for expansion of our interaction.

Both the size and complementary features of our economies promise a virtually unlimited scope for linkages. I hope our Joint Commission, which will be established shortly, will provide a detailed road map for exploring these avenues. Our agreements in upstream and downstream projects in the hydrocarbon sector, in agriculture and in science and technology would add new areas of promise to our action plan for cooperation.

Looking beyond the bilateral canvas, the countries of ASEAN and India have a common interest in the maintenance of peace and stability in the region and beyond. We greatly value our cooperation with ASEAN and its fora. We share ASEAN's vision of prosperity through expanded regional economic integration. The Indian Ocean Rim Association is another regional forum whose promise is yet to be fulfilled. We consider Indonesia an important role player in moving the Association towards purposeful objectives.

Excellency, these are some of our ideas for elevating the quality of our partnership for the progress of our peoples. As two of the world's largest democracies, we represent the hopes and aspirations of over one-sixth of humanity. We have to respond to these hopes and aspirations with a meaningful alliance. Your visit to us last year inspired us to move faster in this direction. My visit here is an effort to impart a further forward momentum.

# India and Indonesia—A Traditional Economic Partner

IT GIVES ME great pleasure to be here with you today at this Sixth Meeting of the Indo-Indonesian Joint Business Council, which is being held after a gap of nearly five years. I thank the two Chambers for arranging this event during my visit.

I had been looking forward to this interaction with the leading representatives of the business communities of our two countries. As two large countries and proximate neighbours, it is entirely in our own mutual interest to explore all avenues for expanding the bilateral economic and commercial relations between us.

Indonesia has always been close to us physically, culturally and politically. We have been trading nations for more than 1,000 years. The northern tip of Sumatra is less than one hundred kilometers away from the Southern tip of Nicobar Islands. We share a maritime boundary with Indonesia and have a vital interest in the security and stability of our common borders.

India and Indonesia have shared a lot with each other in the past, and we both are proud of it. In the modern era, we have added a strong dimension of mutually beneficial economic cooperation to our traditional friendship.

Indonesia is India's third largest trading partner among ASEAN. It is also one of the leading investors in India from the region. Our trade turnover touched US $ 1.3 billion in 1999-2000. This represents a 30 per cent growth over the previous year figure, which we welcome. Growth is healthy in itself even though the trade balance in this case is against us.

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Speech at the Joint Business Council Meeting between FICCI and KADIN, Jakarta, 11 January 2001

Indonesia has been a supplier to India of edible oil, organic chemicals, coal and petroleum. We welcome the recent Indonesian investments in India, notably in the area of paper manufacture.

For decades, Indian joint ventures have been operating in Indonesia in areas like textile, steel, garments, hand tools, etc. Today I convey my deep appreciation to the Indian business community in Indonesia for its enterprise and commitment. Businessmen and professionals of Indian origin have made full use of the support they received from the Government and the people of Indonesia to contribute to the prosperity of their host country. In the process, they have helped India gain greater goodwill in Indonesian society.

Such a two-way process creates a stake in each other's growth and welfare, which is mutually supportive and beneficial. Nevertheless, there still exists considerable potential for improvement in both our trade and investment. I am sure that this Joint Business Council would bring us closer to realizing this potential.

We in India watched with great concern the economic and financial crisis, which Indonesia so bravely faced for two years and I am glad to see the signs of recovery. Under the able and wise leadership of President Abdurrahman Wahid, Indonesia would surely revive the pace of growth for which it was long known and admired.

Friends, as you know, India has embarked on a path of radical economic reforms. Fair distribution of resources, creating infrastructure-both physical and human-and ensuring economic opportunities to all, are the prime tasks of my Government. These tasks have by no means diminished with liberalization of the Indian economy: indeed, liberalization has only brought our responsibility as a Government into clearer focus.

India's annual growth rate of six per cent and more in the nineties has made us among the top ten fast growing

economies in the world. We have set ourselves an ambitious target of doubling our per capita income in the first decade of the new millennium. This requires that we speed up growth to about nine per cent. We are confident of achieving this daunting target. In the process, we are determined to ensure that the benefits of globalization do not pass by the common man.

Friends, through rapid advances in communications and information technology, the world has come closer to realising the ancient Indian ideal, which in Sanskrit we call, "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam"—namely, the entire world is but one family. However, the danger of enhanced mobility of capital, technology, goods and services is that those countries which are quick to take advantage of information technology may rapidly overtake the slow ones and leave them far behind. Such unbalanced growth between and within nations can have serious implications for social stability and peace. A double-digit growth of GDP is meaningless if it fails to enhance the quality of life of all Indians.

India is making conscious efforts to overcome this imbalance, even as we aim at faster economic growth. We are willing to share our experience and capabilities with our Indonesian friends. The recent visit by our Minister for Information Technology, Shri Pramod Mahajan, to Indonesia in connection with the Indonesian International Telecommunication, Media & Information Technology Conference and Exhibition was a step forward in sharing our knowledge and resources in the IT sector. We shall gladly share our expertise with Indonesia in setting up world-class IT education centres and facilities for software development and IT-enabled services.

Likewise, we have offered our considerable experience in the transport sector, especially in railways to Indonesia in particular, to Sumatra.

Since the visit of H.E. President Wahid to India last year,

we have made rapid strides in further cementing our collaboration in the area of oil and natural gas. An MOU has been signed between India's ONGC *Videsh* and *Pertamina* of Indonesia, under which the Indian company would assist in exploration and production at new sites to be developed in Indonesia. We greatly welcome a long-term mutually beneficial cooperation in this area, which offers the potential for clean fuel from a friendly, proximate source to our eastern seaboard.

Another area, which offers considerable potential for us, is agriculture. In the '60s the makers of the Green Revolution transformed India from a food importing country to one which has a net surplus of grain. In fact, we are now facing a serious problem of storing our surplus grain. We can gladly share our surplus and also our experiences and technologies in this area with Indonesia.

Distinguished Businessmen, our two countries have a history of deep friendship, which is based on shared views and principles. Together we spearheaded the move for Asian resurgence in Bandung, which grew into the Non-Aligned Movement. Since then we have cooperated in various fora of developing countries, notably the G-15, IOR-ARC and, of course, ASEAN. In a fast changing world, the friendship of two large and diverse nations like India and Indonesia can provide an anchor of peace and stability for our region and for the world.

Friends, these were the few thoughts that I wanted to share with you. In the present economic climate, it is generally said that Governments have no business to be in business. I must confess that I do not entirely agree with this otherwise sensible thought. In the era of economic reforms, it is all the more necessary for governments to plan a long-term strategy for economic cooperation among nations, and to facilitate public and private business to implement the strategy.

I am confident that the governments and businesses of our two countries will shape the evolving contours of our bilateral trade and economic relations. I am equally sure that

these will reflect and also magnify our historically cordial political ties.

I wish both sides very successful deliberations at the Sixth Joint Business Council Meeting between India and Indonesia. Finally, I wish you all a very happy New Year and New Millennium.

# Millennia-old Ties with South-East Asia

AT THE OUTSET, I convey my hearty felicitations to my countrymen on the auspicious occasion of *Makar Sankranti, Pongal, Lohri and Bihu*. This is a festival that marks the arrival of spring in India and of a new harvest season when people exchange greetings in the hope and expectation of prosperity and happiness for all.

As I return to India after a week-long visit to Vietnam and Indonesia, I see a new spring of hope in India's engagement with these two important Asian countries. I return with profound satisfaction and with the confidence that our relations with these two traditional allies, and with the South-east Asian region as a whole, will yield a good harvest of greater co-operation and prosperity in the coming times.

This visit, for me, has truly been a fascinating study in India's past as well as her future, insofar as our relations with South-east Asia are concerned. Before the visit, some observers had noted that this was a part of India's "Look East" policy. As a matter of fact, it should be termed as a policy of "Revisit East". India has had remarkably close cultural ties with this

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Statement on his return from Vietnam and Indonesia, New Delhi, 14 January 2001

region, which is our extended neighbourhood. These ties date back to several millennia and have created an enormous reservoir of goodwill for our country.

Even in the recent past, India has engaged herself deeply with Vietnam's struggle for liberation and reunification and with Indonesia's endeavour for national reconstruction. Mahatma Gandhi himself participated in the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in March 1947, which not only pledged its solidarity with the newly independent Indonesia and with all the other countries engaged in their freedom struggles, but also outlined a powerful vision of a resurgent Asian community living in peace, prosperity and harmonious co-operation in the future. In this context, we must recall the enormous personal commitment and contribution of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to this cause, best exemplified by the Bandung Conference of 1955, which gave birth to the Non-Aligned Movement.

The new century has brought into being a new reality in the world, and also in Asia, throwing up many challenges and opportunities before India. We need a creative and dynamic foreign policy that effectively responds to this new reality, harnessing the immense hidden strengths of India's conflict-free historical engagements with this region. India's civilizational past provides the strong foundation on which we can build a robust edifice of our future relations with all the countries in Asia for the common good of all in Asia and the world. This, indeed, is the vision that guides our "Revisit East" policy, of which my present visit is an initial effort. My visits to this region next month will continue this effort. These links are important both to promote peace, security and stability and to strengthen our network of co-operation with countries of Asia in dealing with the challenges of globalization.

In Hanoi, I had fruitful talks with Mr. Le Kha Phieu General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, President Tran Duc Luong, and Prime Minister Phan Van Khai. I also had the honour of meeting General Giap, the legendary hero

of Vietnam's resistance to external aggression. My talks with the Vietnamese leadership covered a wide range of issues, yielding several agreements for bilateral co-operation. In addition to further strengthening the traditional areas of co-operation like agriculture and oil resources development, we now plan to extend it to newer areas of opportunity such as Information Technology and Atomic Energy. The Vietnamese leadership recalled with great appreciation and in much detail all the important events in India's support to their country's struggle for independence and later for reunification. Both sides recognized the need to rapidly increase bilateral trade, Indian investments in Vietnam, and joint ventures, to fully realize the natural synergies between our two economies. Vietnam is an important ally of India in ASEAN. It has publicly underlined the importance of India's participation in all major political and economic fora in the region

In Indonesia, I had extremely fruitful talks with President Abdurrahman Wahid and Vice-President Megawati Soekarnoputri. We were received by the Indonesian leadership with exceptional warmth beyond the requirements of protocol. I was deeply touched by the cordiality of our Indonesian hosts both in Jakarta and in the enchanting island of Bali. There is now greater recognition on both sides that our two countries must work closely together for mutual good. This is indeed the basis for the large number of agreements signed during the visit, which aim at taking our economic, trade, cultural and defence co-operation to higher levels.

It is important for us and for the region, that Indonesia remains strong and stable. India has pledged its unstinted support to Indonesia's unity and territorial integrity. We applaud Indonesia's efforts to recover from the recent economic crisis. We are confident that Indonesia, which is blessed with enormous human and natural resources, will soon bounce back on the road to rapid, all-round progress. We are equally confident that Indonesia will succeed in its current efforts to strengthen democracy.

Like the Batik shirt, which is its traditional pride, Indonesia is a kaleidoscope of many ethnic, religious and linguistic communities. Nobody who visits Indonesia can fail to be impressed by the mutual tolerance and harmony that marks the social life in this country. As the world globalizes more and more, we must strengthen the atmosphere of mutual tolerance, understanding and co-operation among people belonging to different faiths and cultures. The forces of terrorism, extremism and separatism pose a common threat to peace, stability and development in Asia and in the world. I am proud that both India and Indonesia, tied together by precious bonds of civilization and culture, proclaim this important message in their own unique ways to the world and to their own peoples.

Today I place on record my grateful appreciation for the support of the leaderships of both Vietnam and Indonesia to India's vital concerns. India's struggle against terrorism received support both in Hanoi and in Jakarta. The idea of deepening and broadening regional co-operation through initiatives like ASEAN and the Mekong-Ganga-Cooperation was further amplified. An important feature of the visit was the useful interaction between Indian businessmen and their Vietnamese and Indonesian counterparts. These meetings highlighted the urgent need to remove the prevailing awareness gap about the complementarity in the economies of India and South-east Asian countries.

I return with many pleasant memories of this visit, further strengthened in my belief that there is an immense need, as well as scope, for increasing India's engagement with Southeast Asia at all levels.

My visits to Vietnam and Indonesia reflect India's abiding and enduring ties with Asia. In the same spirit, I look forward to my discussions tomorrow with Mr. Li Peng, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China. As two great civilizations and neighbours, India and

China are engaged in the process of resolving, and putting behind us, past differences and forging a new and dynamic relationship for the 21st century for the benefit of our two countries and the world.

# India and Mauritius—Historic Ties of Kinship

I EXTEND TO your Excellency, to Lady Jugnauth and to other members of the Mauritian delegation a very warm welcome. You come as an old friend who knows India well.

I am confident that this visit will add an abiding imprint on the fabric of the close relations between our two countries.

India and Mauritius are bound together by historic ties of kinship, reinforced by our commitment to democracy. More recently, our common struggle for national Independence again brought us together. It is exactly a century since Gandhiji visited Mauritius. Those fateful days marked the start of a process of political awakening.

The torch lit by him was later held aloft by the great sons of Mauritius, prominent among whom were Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam and the Bissoondoyal brothers, Sookdeo and Basdeo. They symbolized the triumph of the human spirit over exploitation. The definition of nationhood scripted by these heroes continues to guide the Mauritian nation even today.

The spectacular economic strides made by Mauritius have also brought our two countries closer together. The second economic miracle which you propose to initiate will certainly

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Speech at the banquet hosted in honour of H.E. Anerood Jugnauth, New Delhi, 16 January 2001

cement our relationship further. Our co-operation is multi-faceted and mutually beneficial. Trade and investment have expanded.

But even our substantial economic co-operation is not commensurate with our profound political equation. There is much more to be done and it is my hope that our entrepreneurs will look to Mauritius as a bridge between India and Africa.

I am glad that we are jointly exploring new opportunities in Information Technology. In the next few days Your Excellency will be visiting our Information Technology facilities to explore the possibility of co-operation in this sphere. This should open yet another new chapter in our relations.

Excellency, peace is a precondition for prosperity. Unfortunately rivalries exist in our region which are not of our making, endangering both peace and progress. The nations of the world are in the process of defining new international relationships in the knowledge that while history evolves, geography remains constant. But legacies of past mistrust tend to persist.

I would like to reiterate to Your Excellency that India remains acutely sensitive to the security concerns of Mauritius and stands ready to help to address them. We fully endorse your right to sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago.

With Mauritius now taking her place in the United Nations Security Council, I am confident that Your Excellency's government will make a dynamic contribution to peace on both regional and global platforms.

The Indian diaspora today is visible in all continents. Our forefathers left the shores of their Indian motherland in search of a better tomorrow. They have since contributed enormously to the political, economic and social life of the countries of their adoption and citizenship.

Today, it is a matter of great pride for us that a descendant of one such Indian is amongst us as the distinguished Prime Minister of his country.

# VIII
# Miscellaneous

# Sustainable Development Through Population Stabilization

TODAY, INDIA'S POPULATION has crossed the one billion mark. This is a serious matter that is both cause for concern and introspection—concern over the impact that a runaway population growth is bound to have on the nation's economic, natural and other resources; introspection over where we went wrong and how we can stabilize our population.

In the century gone by, India's population has grown from 24 crores to 100 crores, registering a more than four-fold increase. This is more than the three-fold increase in the world's population during the same period. With 2.4 per cent of the world's landmass, Indians now constitute 16 per cent of the world's population. Every year, 15.5 million children are born in India, making it virtually impossible for Government and society to ensure that they are not deprived of nutrition, health care and education, the fundamental requirements of any human being.

If the present growth rate of our population remains unchecked, India will become the world's most populous country by the middle of this century, with people clamouring for a share of shrinking natural resources. Essential requirements like drinking water, shelter and health will be difficult to meet. Moreover, there is no way that generation of employment opportunities, creation of physical infrastructure and maintenance of public services can keep pace with a runaway population growth.

India is among those countries that were the first to

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Speech on the occasion of India's population crossing the one billion mark, New Delhi, 11 May 2000

officially adopt population control policies. Yet, while others have succeeded in stabilizing their population, our experience, barring in some States, has been far from satisfactory. Obviously, there were flaws in the policies that we have pursued over the last four decades as well as in their implementation.

Government realizes that population stabilization cannot be achieved without all-round socio-economic development, and definitely not through coercion. Family welfare by itself is not enough; along with it, Government needs to, and shall, ensure economic and social welfare. For, lower population growth has a direct correlation with increased access to primary health care facilities and a wide variety of contraceptives, education (especially for the girl child), social empowerment and freedom of choice for women. This is the experience of States that have been able to check their population growth.

Bearing this in mind, and realizing the urgency of the need to stabilize our population, Government has adopted a National Population Policy and set up a broad-based Population Commission to monitor the implementation of this policy. Population stabilization and family welfare should form the cornerstone of a new national mission that aims at providing a better quality of life for all citizens of this country. For this mission to succeed, Government seeks the active participation of voluntary associations and community-based organizations. Indeed, every Indian should come forward and join this national effort so that we can turn the trend in the next decade and move towards sustainable development through population stabilization.

To realize our common dream of a prosperous India, Government, with the help of voluntary associations and community-based organizations, will seek to inspire and encourage every Indian to strive for a sustainable and balanced family that does not strain the resources of the individual, society or nation. With the people's participation, Government is confident that the national task of population stabilization will be fulfilled.

# Create Awareness for Environment Protection

IT GIVES ME great pleasure to be with you today and share some of my thoughts on environment related issues. These are fast occupying the centre-stage of national as well as international concern.

This is not without reason.

For, in nations across the world, human development in the 21st century will be increasingly linked to protecting environmental resources from mindless consumption and destruction. Maintaining ecological balance, already rendered fragile by the excesses of the 20th century, will be integral to development programmes. India cannot be an exception.

The devastation wrought by the drought in several parts of our country is a manifestation of the ill effects of excesses that have resulted from flawed development strategies. In the name of development and modernity, these strategies have destroyed traditional life-sustaining structures and systems for short-term gains.

Let me give you an example.

An elaborate rain-water harvesting system that had been created centuries ago in Rajasthan after carefully mapping the terrain has been destroyed to facilitate wide-scale mining, licences for which were issued by Government.

Seen from the narrow perspective of development models that seek to deliver instant jobs and immediate wealth, these mines were a boon for the people living in what is among the least developed regions of the country. The Government

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Speech while inaugurating the conference of State Environment and Forest Ministers, New Delhi, 16 May 2000

was happy; the contractors were happy; the people were happy.

Years later, we find vast tracts of Rajasthan, including areas once served by the traditional viaduct, in the grip of a severe drought.

True, the ancient water harvesting system that I refer to, alone may not have been able to prevent the drought. But surely it could have minimized the impact and mitigated the suffering of the people.

The point I am stressing is that let us not destroy traditional life-sustaining structures and systems that exist. Let us preserve them and, indeed, further strengthen, and add to them, to secure sustainable development.

The results may not be instant, but they will benefit future generations and protect them from hunger and disease. They will also prevent the loss of their livelihood, which is often dependent on their cattle wealth or a patch of land that supports sustenance farming.

Here I would like to cite the example of Palamau district in Bihar where *pani panchayats* have been set up to harvest water and manage watersheds. With the help of traditional structures and modern scientific inputs like which crop needs how much water, a drought-prone area has witnessed remarkable change and is now set on the path of sustainable development.

While on this issue, I would like to draw your attention to the 1992 Rio Conference that acknowledged the need to synergize economic development with environmental resources. Government has been trying to synergise the two—and we have succeeded to an extent—but a lot more remains to be done.

After all, no development activity that severely depletes our natural resources or degrades our environment can ultimately benefit the people.

We need to address environmental concerns while preparing development policies. Project evaluation should not be based on financial cost-benefit analysis alone.

This is no doubt a difficult task. With our population crossing one billion, the demand on resources and infrastructure can be well imagined. The Union and State Governments are under ever-increasing pressure to generate an ever-larger number of employment opportunities through rapid economic development.

Therein lies the trap.

Often, in our haste to deliver, we overlook the long-term impact of development projects—be they industry or infrastructure related, or the expansion of the frontiers of urban India—on the environment. As a result, today's success turns into tomorrow's failure.

The lesson that stares us all in the face is simple in its starkness: Rapid population growth, coupled with rapid urbanization and rapid development that does not take into account ecological factors, invariably leads to rapid depletion of our natural resources and equally rapid degradation of our environment.

We can ignore this reality at the cost of the future of our people.

For their sake, and the sake of future generations of Indians, we have to start emphasizing restrained resource utilization so that our ecological integrity is not impaired. Let us prove that contrary to general belief, environmental conservation accelerates, rather than hinders, economic development.

The importance of environmental conservation is brought home with unerring effect every time we face a calamity or natural disaster. Last year, it was underscored by the super-cyclone that ravaged coastal Orissa.

Ironically, it is nature that showed us how to face nature's

fury: Areas with mangrove vegetation suffered comparatively less damage. The lesson was not wasted. The Environment Ministry has identified protection, restoration and regeneration of mangroves as a thrust area.

The Orissa calamity has also highlighted the need for urgent measures like shelterbelt plantation along cyclone-prone coastal areas. Species chosen for this purpose should not only be able to withstand the impact of strong cyclonic winds, but also check soil erosion. State Governments should come forward with schemes for this purpose. The Ministry of Environment and Forests will support the State Governments in implementing these schemes.

Friends, protecting our environment does not necessarily mean putting a stop to development activity, nor does it mean putting a halt to progress. We have to look for pragmatic solutions to problems posed by development projects. We have to bear in mind their long-term impact on the environment and ecology of the region, the State and the nation.

Therefore, our model has to be one that ensures sustainable development.

In short, we have to balance progress and consumption with conservation of resources.

This will be possible if we make environmental security a national mission, a movement that involves the people. Voluntary associations, through people's participation, have successfully handled many a conservation project. Chipko is an example that all of us are familiar with.

It is only when we give people a direct stake in protecting the environment—be it watershed management, forest conservation or pollution control—that they will become active partners of Government. To achieve this goal, I propose a sustained awareness campaign that involves panchayats, community organizations, voluntary associations, municipal bodies, corporate sector and educational institutions.

Together, we can overcome the challenge that we face—a challenge exemplified by the fact that in as many as 20 river basins people face water shortage. For a nation whose civilizational history is rooted in the banks of her rivers, nothing could be more devastating.

I look forward to fruitful deliberations at this conference of State Ministers of Environment and Forest on the challenges that we face and possible responses to present and future problems.

# Promoting the Cause of Human Rights

IT GIVES ME GREAT pleasure to be invited by Rotary Award for Service to Humanity (India) Trust to present a very special award to a very special person this evening.

Few men are perhaps better qualified to be chosen for the first Rotary India Award on Human Rights than Justice M. N. Venkatachaliah. His name is indelibly linked to the noble ideal of advancement of human rights in India, thanks to his long and distinguished service in the judiciary and, later, as the Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission. The good work started by him in the Commission has been continued by his able successor, Justice Verma.

*ये दोनों न्यायमूर्ति हैं और मानवाधिकार की भी मूर्ति हैं*

Human rights is not an alien concept to us. It is not as if India borrowed it from democracies in the West after the issue gained international currency in recent decades. In the very emblem of the National Human Rights Commission is

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Speech while presenting the Rotary India Award on Human Rights, New Delhi, 23 June 2000

enshrined the age-old Vedic ideal: *Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah*—May All Be Happy.

Here "All" does not mean all of a particular community or a race or a nation, but all the human beings on earth. Our ideal of human rights is, thus, as universal as it is ancient.

Nor do we in India understand human rights in a limited and restrictive sense in terms of certain abuses here and there. It is wrong to think of human rights in parts, nor their denial in parts. Human life and happiness are indivisible. Only a holistic approach will help us achieve material prosperity for all, social and cultural progress for all, and human dignity for all.

India not only developed an original and profound understanding of human rights, but also constructed the three pillars on which the edifice of human rights rests. These pillars are democracy, secularism, and the rule of law. These ideals might not have been articulated in the past through their modern idioms. But, in their essential form, they have always been the hallmark of the best periods in Indian history. They have been championed by philosophers and social reformers belonging to all the diverse religious and social traditions of India. That is why, after Independence we adopted a Constitution that guarantees basic human rights not only to our own citizens, without any discrimination, but also to those who happen to visit our sacred land.

I am not harking back to the past because it is a comfortable distraction from the glaring gap between the ideals and the reality at present. No. I am doing so, because I believe that we can best promote respect for human rights by rooting our efforts in our own cultural and spiritual traditions, without, however, turning a blind eye to the positive lessons from the experiences of other countries around the world.

I emphasize the importance of our cultural and spiritual traditions for another reason. Not all the right things in society can be ensured by laws and regulations alone. Law cannot

teach a person to be compassionate, caring, and sensitive to other people's sorrows and joys. And human rights cannot be secure in a society where these qualities are weak. For example, atrocities on *Dalits,* women, poor and the weak cannot be stopped by legal methods alone. Social maladies call for social remedies.

It is, therefore, necessary that we pay far greater attention than we have done so far to the role of education, media, and socio-cultural reforms in creating an environment in which respect for human rights becomes the natural trait of citizens and institutions.

Of course, the role of the law and governmental machinery in expanding and deepening the scope of human rights can hardly be overemphasized. The National Human Rights Commission has rendered a commendable service by creating greater awareness about human rights and also by checking their gross abuses. So far, however, only 10 States have set up similar commissions. I would urge those States, which have not done so, to follow suit speedily. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, which, I am told, account for 65 per cent of the nearly 50,000 complaints that are received annually by the National Commission.

The Commission has suggested some amendments to the Protection of Human Rights Act following the report of the Justice Ahmadi Committee. Justice Verma has referred to this matter in his speech. The Government will examine these suggestions and take early steps to enact necessary amendments to further strengthen the legal framework for the protection of human rights.

I believe that we should be open and willing to fully recognize the deficiencies and infringements in the area of human rights in India. For without being truthful to the nature and extent of the problem, there can be no effective and durable solution. We should spare no effort to infuse greater sensitivity, efficiency, and accountability in the functioning of

the police, administration and other institutions that have a direct bearing on the human rights of citizens.

Wherever necessary, rules and procedures of these institutions should be radically overhauled to reduce the possibility of their contribution to the violation of human rights of our citizens. This is especially urgent in the context of the untold difficulties faced by the poor and illiterate in their dealings with the institutions of the State.

All the people working in these institutions should bear in mind a simple guiding principle: The more we enforce the rule of law, the better we promote human rights. It is a principle which Justice Venkatachaliah himself has enunciated very pithily in one of his famous judgements I am quoting from his judgement: "Governance is not of men but of the rule of law." I would like all of us responsible for governance at the Centre and in State Governments and local bodies to mull over the meaning of these profound words more and more.

At the same time, I wish also to caution against the tendency, seen among some commentators on the human rights in India, to exaggerate, to sensationalize, to judge a situation without regard to the overall context, to view certain issues through the coloured glasses of outsiders, and to wittingly or unwittingly project a negative picture of India around the world.

Another thought. In a developing country like India, the task of advancing human rights is integrally linked to speedy and balanced socio-economic growth. Poverty is one of the worst violators of human rights—and so also is the society that allows poverty to persist. India has all the human and natural resources needed to provide decent living standards to all our citizens. This, however, can be achieved only by removing the shackles on India's all-round economic progress. This is the true purpose of our economic reforms. Our reforms have a human face because they are designed to promote economic and social justice for all our citizens, especially the poorest and the most deprived.

A word about the timing of this award presentation ceremony, which appears to have something to do with our desire to bring the issue of human rights into greater limelight. Knowingly or unknowingly, the organizers have chosen this day for holding the function, which is only two days before the 25th anniversary of the imposition of Emergency in India. As we all know, it was the darkest period for Indian democracy. It was also a direct assault on the fundamental human rights of our citizens. Happily, that sad chapter came to an early end. It is our duty, and the duty of our succeeding generations, to ensure that it never re-visits us.

Before I conclude, I must applaud Justice Venkatachaliah for the new role in which he is now serving the nation, namely, as the Chairman of the Constitution Review Commission. His stature, his erudition and his impeccable impartiality have been hailed by one and all. In this new responsibility, too, Justice Venkatachaliah will continue his spirited championing of human rights.

I once again heartily congratulate Justice Venkatachaliah for receiving the Rotary India Award on Human Rights and, thereby, further promoting the cause of human rights in India.

# Tapping Non-conventional Sources of Energy

AT THE OUTSET, I wish to tell you how happy I am at setting foot on the sacred soil of Kayathar. It finds an honored place in the history of Free India because of its association with the immortal memory of Veerapandya Kattabomman. He was one of the first martyrs of India's freedom struggle who

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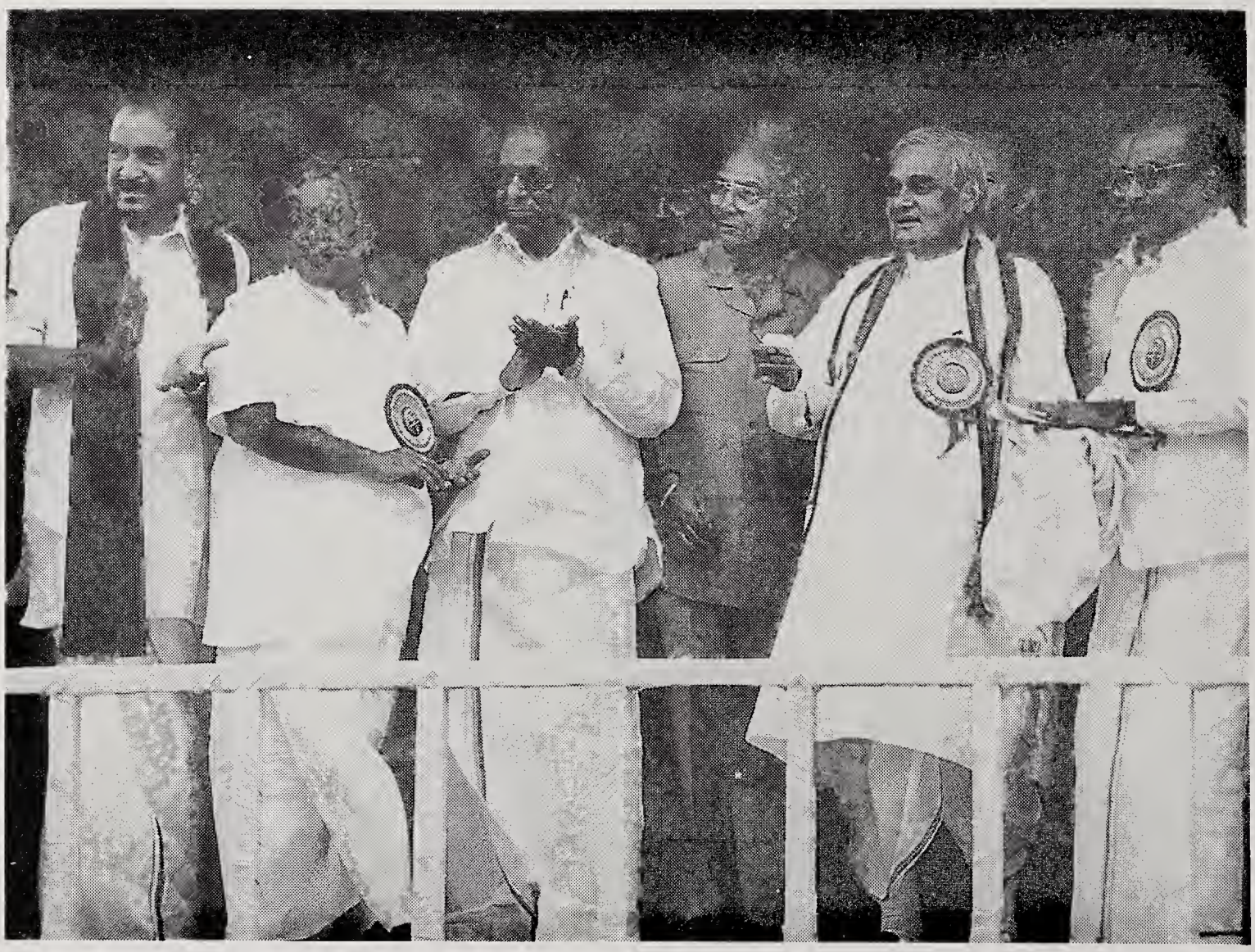
Speech while dedicating the Wind Power Project and Test Station to the Nation, Kayathar (Tamil Nadu), 5 July 2000

was hanged by the British in the 18th century. I am sad that the name of Kattabomman and the heroic exploits of him and his brother are not very well-known to the people in north India.

Tamil Nadu is a land of brave and patriotic people. Following in his footsteps, many men and women from this region plunged into the freedom movement, writing inspiring chapters of valour and success. Among them are the hallowed names of *Rashtrakavi* Subramania Bharati and V.O. Chidambaram Pillai. It is because of the struggles and supreme sacrifices of tens of thousands of such known and not-so-well-known patriots that we are able to enjoy the fruits of freedom and development today.

Therefore, at the outset I bow my head in respectful tribute to Kattabomman and other martyrs of India's freedom



*Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee dedicating the Test Station of the Centre for Wind Energy Technology to the nation, Kayathar, 5 July 2000*

movement from Tamil Nadu. They struggled for India's freedom. Now, we have to struggle for India's all-round development.

Remembering Kattabomman today is necessary for yet another reason. Kattabomman and his fellow freedom fighters in this southern part of Tamil Nadu belonged to different castes and communities. But they were all united in a common struggle for the freedom of their Motherland. I urge the people belonging to different castes and communities of Tamil Nadu to similarly forge strong bonds of solidarity and unity to achieve the progress of your State and the country.

Friends, I am pleased to be here today to dedicate the 15 megawatt Wind Power Project of Mohan Breweries and RRB Vesta India as well as the Test Station of the Centre for Wind Energy Technology.

I commend the Government and the people of Tamil Nadu for their pioneering and far-sighted approach to the development of wind energy and other forms of renewable energy.

Seventy per cent of the total wind power capacity in the country is in your State. To Tamil Nadu goes the credit for setting up most of the successful wind energy projects in the country. You are also among the largest producers of electricity through bagasse cogeneration in sugar plants.

I congratulate my friend, Thiru Karunanidhiji, and his colleagues for this proud achievement. I am sure that under his dynamic leadership, Tamil Nadu's full potential in the renewable energy sector would be quickly developed.

There is a close linkage between energy and development. Rapid development of agriculture, industry, and services is inconceivable without energy sufficiency. Unfortunately, we in India failed to evolve a proper policy to ensure this, through a well-coordinated approach to generation, transmission, and distribution of power. As a result, most States are facing

chronic scarcities of power. This has slowed down their economic and social development.

For example, even today as many as 77 million households comprising 350 million of our people still do not get electricity. Of course, this does not apply to Tamil Nadu, which has achieved 100 per cent rural electrification.

Since the beginning of our civilization, we have recognized *Agni* (fire) and *Vayu* (wind) as sources of energy. We worshipped them as deities. After Independence, however, we did not pay adequate attention to develop the necessary technologies and enabling policies to harness their latent power.

India, being a tropical country, enjoys abundant sunshine. The country's geography provides ample opportunities for using wind energy. Our plentiful water resources can support many small and medium-sized hydel projects. Our large land resources can produce a lot of biomass, which is yet another form of renewable energy.

Unfortunately, we have not so far adequately tapped these non-traditional sources of energy. For example, India's potential in wind energy is a staggering 45,000 megawatts. However, our installed capacity so far is only 1,170 megawatts. This shows that we have a long way to go in making full use of this cheap, environment-friendly, and renewable source of power.

Our Government is determined to develop all our natural energy resources in a sustainable manner. We realize that we need to further smoothen the process to encourage large-scale private sector investment to achieve this goal. We also need to promote intensive efforts in R&D to create renewable energy technologies that are appropriate to Indian conditions.

In rural areas, our thrust has to be on cooking energy, as this constitutes about 85 per cent of our rural household energy demand. It is not, however, enough for Government agencies to assist in the provision of more bio-gas plants and

*chulhas,* which we already have in millions. There should be adequate facilities for their proper maintenance.

The Government has recently approved a unique 140 megawatt Integrated Solar Combined Cycle Power Project, which will be the world's largest such project. This will be set up in a desert village near Jodhpur in Rajasthan. We also have ambitious schemes to spread the use of solar energy. We rank fourth in the world in this regard, with nearly 700,000 solar systems covering thirty different applications already installed. Here again, I urge that greater attention be paid to maintain these installations in efficient working order.

Our Government has given renewed emphasis to the development of hydel power. In order to facilitate concentrated attention, the work relating to the development of small hydro projects up to 25 megawatts capacity has recently been transferred to the Ministry of Non-conventional Energy Sources. I expect the Ministry to soon come up with a time-bound action plan for the exploitation of these resources, particularly in the remote hilly regions, and in Ladakh, Sikkim, and the North-Eastern States.

We are implementing the world's largest bagasse based cogeneration programme in our sugar mills—the potential for which is 3,500 megawatts. This will help increase power supply in the rural areas.

Our Government envisions a major role for renewables in the energy sector in the new century. For this, a comprehensive policy on renewable energy is being formulated. Among the goals envisaged in the Policy Statement for 2012 is to increase the share of renewables in the additional installed power capacity from the present 1.7 per cent to 10 per cent. That implies a figure of 10,000 megawatts in the next 12 years. I invite business houses, especially big business houses, to make big investments to achieve this goal.

States have a major role to play in the accelerated development and usage of renewable energy. I urge all other

States to emulate the good example of Tamil Nadu and integrate renewable energy in their power development programmes. They could even consider prescribing a minimum quantity of electricity to be generated from renewable energy sources. This could apply to all power projects, in the public or the private sector.

To meet the higher capital requirements of this sector, our Government will increase the budgetary support to this sector in the subsequent Plans. States should allocate matching resources in their State Plans. Most of the capital requirements, however, would have to come through private investments, from overseas and domestic sources, supported by lending from financial institutions. Environmental funding opportunities such as Global Environment Facility and flexibility mechanisms for climate change mitigation, such as the Clean Development Mechanism, could also be tapped, as long as these are in consonance with our national policies.

Quality is important in developing any new technology. I am happy, therefore, that the Test Station of the Centre for Wind Energy Technology that is being dedicated today will help standardize, test, and certify wind turbines. I hope that this first centre of its kind in the country would help raise indigenous capabilities in improving the performance levels of wind turbine equipment in our country.

Friends, we have gathered here for the inauguration of a wind power project. It is appropriate, perhaps, that we reflect on the winds of change blowing across our vast country. The biggest change in recent years has been the rapidly rising level of expectations of our people. Wherever I go, I see a tremendous hunger for development, among our citizens, especially those who live in underdeveloped regions and who belong to underdeveloped sections of our society. People are no longer willing to accept or tolerate these regional and social imbalances, which have remained even after fifty years of Independence.

Their hunger for development has to be met by all of us collectively. Let us all, therefore, be guided by the *mantra* of

Development, Faster Development, and More Equitable Development.

I congratulate all the engineers, technicians and other staff working for the promoters and the agencies associated with this wind power project and the Test Station. I now dedicate these installations to the nation.

# Optimum Harnessing of Water Resources

I HAVE GREAT pleasure in participating in the fourth meeting of the National Water Resources Council.

We have gathered here to discuss various aspects of development and management of water resources. Together, they constitute a vital input for the social and economic progress of our country.

We have, no doubt, achieved a lot in our efforts to improve the harnessing and managing of our water resources. But a lot more remains to be done.

Indeed, one of the major challenges of the future will be to meet the demands of an expanding economy and increasing population for water. With reducing per capita availability, we have to devise ways and means for the optimum development of our water resources to meet these demands and thus overcome this challenge.

The success of our collective initiative to overcome this challenge will depend on putting into place the following:

- A comprehensive water resources information system that

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Speech at the inaugural session of the fourth meeting of the National Water Resources Council, New Delhi, 7 July 2000

takes into account availability and demand;

- An institutional mechanism for the integrated development and management of resources in each river basin; and,
- Agreements on sharing of waters of inter-State rivers by co-basin States.

We also need to seriously consider how to tackle the problems of deteriorating quality of water, over exploitation of ground water, adverse impact on environment and adequate rehabilitation of those affected by development schemes.

These and other issues broadly form the agenda of this meeting and are encapsulated in the revised draft National Water Policy, which is before you. I also look forward to the meeting deliberating on the proposed draft guidelines for water allocation among co-basin States so that a consensus on this also can be eventually arrived at.

The draft Policy has been framed as a basis of discussion to arrive at a national consensus to enable the optimum use of our water resources to contribute towards sustainable development on a long-term basis.

I have been informed that the draft of the Policy and the Guidelines have been formulated after discussions in the National Water Policy Board of which all the Chief Secretaries of the State Governments are members.

I am aware that while there is a consensus among most States on these documents, some of you have expressed apprehensions on three major issues:

- Putting into place a comprehensive information system;
- Setting up of river basin organizations; and,
- Allocating water among co-basin States.

A well-developed and transparent information system is

a pre-requisite for development activities at both macro and micro levels. Development of water resources is no exception. An information system that provides data to co-basin States does not impinge on their rights; on the contrary, it facilitates better utilization of their legitimate share of water.

One of the negative fallouts of the model of development of water resources has been the emergence of regional imbalances resulting from the absence of a holistic view. These imbalances can be corrected if there is an overall framework for the development and management of water. In order to achieve this goal, setting up of river basin organizations with adequate powers to act as facilitators has been proposed. There is apprehension that establishment of such organizations may impinge upon the inherent authority of State Governments or their rights to maintain irrigation structures.

The Central Government is, however, very clear that unless there is total unanimity among the participating State Governments, such authorities will not be created.

The issue of sharing of water by co-basin States is also a contentious issue. Absence of national guidelines on allocation of water among co-basin States has primarily contributed to this situation.

The draft Policy includes a provision on the allocation of water among States. The National Water Board has proposed draft Guidelines to facilitate this allocation. These guidelines have been suggested with a view to ensuring fruitful discussions that will lead to adoption of procedures that safeguard the interests of the States while enabling equitable economic progress of inhabitants of any river basin.

I hope that apprehensions about these issues can be dispelled and differences ironed out through discussions.

I am, however, conscious of the agenda of today's meeting being heavy. There are two important items on the agenda,

the draft National Water Policy and the draft Guidelines.

I would like to suggest for the consideration of the members of the Council that we focus our attention on the more important item of the draft National Water Policy today. The draft Guidelines can be entrusted to a working group headed by the Union Minister of Water Resources for harmonizing views of all the State Governments and bringing a consensual draft for the consideration of the Council at its next meeting.

I would also like to touch upon another aspect of the development and management of our water resources before I conclude. My Government is committed to providing drinking water to every citizen, especially people living in villages and inaccessible areas. I call upon the State Governments to help us achieve this goal.

Apart from allocation of financial resources, we have to also collectively ensure that drinking water is given top priority while deciding the use of our water resources.

There is no gainsaying that we need to ensure adequate water supply to industry. But we must remember at all times that man comes before machine.

I look forward to this meeting having fruitful discussions on the drafts of Policy and the Guidelines for Allocation of Water among the States.

We have to ensure better management and optimum development of water resources if the water security needs of India are to be met.

The time to achieve this begins now.

# Stabilize Population at a Sustainable Level

I AM HAPPY to be with you at the first meeting of the National Commission on Population. Many of you have taken time off from your busy schedules to be here. This reflects emerging universal concern over the problem of runaway population growth.

The solution to this problem lies in stabilizing our population at a sustainable level. Achieving this stabilization is a challenge. But once we overcome the challenge, we can truly develop our national human resource into a formidable force that will propel India towards all-round prosperity.

It is expected of the State to look after the basic minimum needs of its people. But, as I had pointed out the day we crossed the one billion mark, it is virtually impossible for any State to meet the legitimate requirements of its people if its population continues to gallop from one high to another. As a result, with the best of intentions, the state fails in its primary task: ensuring a better quality of life for the largest possible number of its people.

It is, therefore, the State's responsibility to prevent its population from exploding to unmanageable limits.

This was realized by India much before any other developing country faced with a similar problem. Indeed, we were the first country to formulate and adopt a National Family Planning Programme way back in 1952. The objective of that programme was to "reduce birth rate to the extent necessary to stabilize the population at a level consistent with requirement of national economy".

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Speech at the inaugural meeting of the National Commission on Population, New Delhi, 22 July 2000

Nobody can fault the intention behind that programme; indeed, it was a courageous step forward, given the cultural, social and traditional realities of Indian society five decades ago.

But, a reality-check on how effective that programme and various policies framed subsequently have been in preventing a runaway population growth, reveals rather disturbing facts. Today, India is the second most populous country in the world. With only 2.5 per cent of global land, it is home to nearly 17 per cent of the world's population.

Every year, more than 15 million children are born here to an unsure future. For, India is among those countries that have a high child mortality rate. As many as 100 of every 1,000 of our children aged under five and more than 200 of every 1,000 of our children aged under 15, risk dying a premature death.

No less disturbing are the facts that more than half our children aged under four are undernourished; 30 per cent of our newborns are underweight; 60 per cent of our women are anaemic. Forty per cent of the world's malnourished children are to be found in our country.

It is indeed paradoxical that this dark reality is in sharp contrast to the progress made by us in food production, disease control and overall socio-economic development. These harsh realities persist in spite of numerous population-related programmes and despite huge sums of money being spent by Government.

Obviously there were flaws in these programmes as well as lapses in their implementation.

If I were to list the reasons why despite elaborate family welfare programmes and huge spending, India's population has shot up to one billion from 240 million in the last hundred year they would broadly be:

- Lack of universal access to basic health care facilities;
- High child mortality rate;

- Low literacy rates, especially among women;
- Persistence of high levels of rural and urban poverty;
- Inadequate awareness of options and unmet needs for contraception services;
- And, of course the lack of political will as well as popular will to squarely face the problem and overcome the challenge.

Indeed, the success stories of countries like China, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia show that given the political will, backed by adequate popular response, the apparently impossible task of checking population growth can be achieved.

However, one need not necessarily look for examples outside India.

At home we have the examples of Kerala, Goa, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Each of them has shown exemplary performance in containing the growth of their respective population. The fertility and mortality rates of Kerala and Goa are nearly similar to those of developing countries. These States are reaping the benefits of investing in literacy, especially women's education, health care services and awareness campaigns.

At the other end of the spectrum are Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh . These States have very high mortality as well as fertility rates. They also lag behind in providing adequate access to health care services, investing in education and empowering women—factors that ultimately play a decisive role in determining family size.

Ironically, there are pockets within these States where investing in health and education involving voluntary associations and encouraging community participation have yielded good dividends. I would urge these State Governments to take a cue from the success stories of the States within the country as well as areas within their own territories.

The Central Government, on its part, is determined to ensure that flaws in programmes are removed and lapses in implementation do not recur. As a first step, the Ninth Plan recognizes the need for a strategy to achieve rapid population stabilization by:

- Reducing infant and maternal mortality;
- Meeting felt needs for contraception.

The Ninth Plan also aims at investing more in the social sector and in synergising health literacy and women's empowerment programmes. To ensure that these objectives are fulfilled, and to focus attention on the problem of runaway population growth, we took two subsequent decisions.

The first was the adoption of the National Population Policy 2000 that provides the policy framework for improving the quality and coverage, as well as for monitoring the delivery, of family welfare programmes. The policy focuses both on society as a whole as well as the primary building block of society, the family—it targets overall population stabilization; it aims at encouraging families to achieve sustainable reproductive goals.

Simultaneously, the policy promotes synergy among various social welfare and economic development programmes. It rests on the wisdom that population stabilization is the key to sustainable development which is the key to improvement in the quality of life of the masses.

Our second move was to set up the National Commission on Population. This is a broad based body that includes representatives of both Government and non-government organizations, as well as individuals who can influence society.

Your mandate is to:

- Review, monitor and give directions for the implementation of the National Population Policy so that the goals that we have set for ourselves can be achieved.
- Promote synergy between health, education and related

development programmes so that population stabilization can be achieved by the year 2045.

- Encourage inter-sectoral co-ordination in both planning and implementing programmes with the help of different sectors and agencies of both the Union and the State Governments; and the help of different sectors and agencies of both the Union and the State Governments: and,

- Building up a people's movement in support of this national effort.

The goals set by the National Population Policy are no doubt difficult, but by no means impossible, to achieve, I am confident that with the help of the National Commission on Population, and through you the people of India, Government will be able to achieve:

- Universal access to quality family planning services so that the two-child norm becomes a reality;
- Total coverage of registration of births, deaths and marriages;
- Full access to information on birth limitation methods and freedom of choice, especially to women, for planning their families;
- Reduction of infant mortality rate to below 30 per thousand live births, incidence of low birth weight and maternal mortality rate;
- Immunization against preventable diseases;
- Elimination of incidence of girls being married below the age of 18;
- Increase in the percentage of deliveries conducted by trained persons to 100 per cent;
- Contain Sexually Transmitted Diseases, especially AIDS;
- Universalisation of primary education, reduction in the dropout rates at primary and secondary levels to below 20 per cent both for boys and girls.

To facilitate the attainment of these goals by the National Commission on Population, my Government proposes to set up an Empowered Action Group and a National Population Stabilization Fund.

The Empowered Action Group, attached to the Ministry of Health, will be charged with the responsibility of preparing area-specific programmes, with special emphasis on States that have been lagging behind in containing population growth to manageable limits and will account for nearly half the country's population in the next two decades.

The Group will also concentrate on involving voluntary associations, community organizations and Panchayati Raj Institutions in this national effort. It will explore the possibility of expanding the scope of 'social marketing' of contraceptives in a manner that makes them easily accessible even while raising awareness levels.

The National Population Stabilization Fund, which will provide a window for canalizing monies from national voluntary sources, is being set up to specifically aid projects designed to contribute to population stabilization. I appeal to the corporate sector, industry, trade organizations and individuals to generously contribute to this fund, and thus contribute to this national effort.

To give it a kick-start, the Planning Commission may consider making a seed contribution from resources available with it. We will associate non-government representatives in the management of the National Population Stabilization Fund.

Friends, I look forward to the National Commission on Population playing an active role, not only by generating ideas but also helping in their implementation in the coming years.

I began by saying that India's runaway population growth is a challenge that stares the nation in the face. I would like to conclude by saying that together we can overcome this challenge.

# Caring and Sharing for the Senior Citizens

It gives me great pleasure to be here with you today. National Day for Older Persons is a special occasion, both for you and me. After all, we belong to the same generation.

Civilizationally and culturally, family has been the basic building block of our society. Till recently, most families would have members belonging to three or even four generations living together. Thus, it was the joint family that provided both security and comfort to its elderly members.

Apart from this, society provided the elderly with extended support. Age, therefore, was never a burden either on the individual or on the family; or, for that matter, on society.

Regrettably, in the last few decades, there has been a steady erosion of values that formed the foundations of our families. This has also had an impact on our societal attitudes. Moreover, for a variety of reasons, extended and joint families have broken up into nuclear families.

Pursuit of employment opportunities has resulted in children migrating to different cities and even foreign countries.

The socio-economic trends may have resulted in economic prosperity for individuals. But, the flipside paints a dismal picture: an increasing number of senior citizens in both rural and urban areas are finding themselves left alone in the golden years of their lives.

Recently, a news weekly carried a report about how the number of such citizens is rapidly rising in States that witness higher levels of migration.

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Speech on the occasion of National Day for Older Persons, New Delhi, 1 October 2000

While some of these senior citizens are economically independent, many do not have the wherewithal to look after themselves. In any event, what is common to both is the loneliness and the lack of affection and caring when they need it most.

The state's responsibility to its senior citizens increases manifold in such circumstances. This responsibility is best fulfilled with the help of voluntary groups and community organizations like Helpage India.

On its part, since 1995, Government has been implementing the National Social Assistance Programme for the benefit of senior citizens who do not have access to economic sustenance.

*Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee being blessed by an old woman at a function organized to mark the National Day for Older Persons, New Delhi, 1 October 2000*

The National Old Age Pension Scheme is operated under this programme. The amount disbursed under the Scheme is modest, but we hope to increase it with the help of State Governments.

In January, 1999, Government adopted the National Policy on Elderly Persons whose primary objectives are to encourage individuals to make economic provisions for their own and their spouse's old age; to encourage families to take care of their elder members; to enable voluntary associations to supplement the care provided by families to the elderly; and, to provide care and protection to the vulnerable elderly, especially widows, disabled and destitute elderly. Providing healthcare facilities is integral to this policy.

A National Council for Elderly Persons has been set up to implement this policy. The Council has prepared an Action Plan to be implemented over the next five years. We have also involved Panchayati Raj institutions in providing care facilities to the elderly, especially in the form of old age homes.

However, all these cannot substitute the care and love of near and dear ones. I am sure that there will be a positive trend in social and economic changes that will once again restore the primacy of the family over the individual. We must bear in mind that strong family bonds that do not exclude the elderly are integral to our traditions and to our culture. The family must survive the stresses and strains of society that we are witnessing today.

On this day, I extend my warmest greetings to every senior citizen of this country and I pray for their good health and happiness.

# Time to Move on Towards a Better Future

AS WE BID goodbye to 2000 and usher in 2001, I send my hearty New Year greetings to all my fellow countrymen, as also to the large Diaspora of Indians abroad.

The beginning of a New Year is always a time to look back and to look ahead. A year is but a speck in the life of an ancient nation like India, which is ever youthful in spite of her great antiquity. However, unlike our nation, all of us have a limited life. Each new generation, therefore, has to give a worthy account of itself in its own lifetime, aware that its contribution to India's progress will be judged essentially on two counts: One, how many "legacy problems" inherited from the past has it resolved? Two, how strong a foundation has it laid for the future development of the nation?

My mind probes these questions as my eyes feast on the verdant environs of Kumarakom resort on the banks of the sea-sized Vembanad lake in Kerala. I have come here for my year-end holidays, far away from the national capital. Nature's silent beauty provides a perfect setting here for contemplation. And I wish to share some of my thoughts with my countrymen with this article.

Our country is facing many problems that are a legacy of our history. I wish to share my views on two of them. One is the long-standing problem with Pakistan over Jammu & Kashmir and the other is the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute at Ayodhya.

A self-confident and resilient nation does not postpone the inconvenient issues of yesterday to a distant tomorrow. Rather, it strives to decisively overcome the problems of the past so that it can pursue its developmental agenda for the

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Musings on New Year (Part-I), Kumarakom (Kerala), 1 January 2001

future with single-minded determination. I have heard many of my countrymen tell me that, now that we have entered a new century and a new millennium, it is time we found lasting solutions to these two problems, one of which is a legacy of the last century and the other a legacy of the last millennium. I agree with them.

The Kashmir problem is an unfortunate inheritance from the tragic partition of India in 1947. India never accepted the pernicious Two-Nation theory that brought about the partition. However, the mindset that created Pakistan continues to operate in that country. This is why it is continuing with its untenable policy on Kashmir, disregarding the considerations of both good-neighbourly relations with India and the well-being of the people of Jammu & Kashmir.

India is willing and ready to seek a lasting solution to the Kashmir problem. Towards this end, we are prepared to re-commence talks with Pakistan at any level, including the highest level, provided Islamabad gives sufficient proof of its preparedness to create a conducive atmosphere for a meaningful dialogue. I am sad to note, however, that the Government of Pakistan is not doing enough to reign in terrorist organizations based on its soil that are continuing their killing spree, targeting both innocent civilians and our security personnel in Kashmir and other parts of India.

The Government is taking well-conceived steps to normalize the situation in Jammu & Kashmir. The unilateral cessation of combat operations against militants in the State, which was observed during the holy month of Ramzan, has been extended till January 26. My heart shares the agony of the grieving mothers, sisters and widows who have lost their near and dear ones in the violence that has bloodied the beautiful Kashmir Valley. I also feel the pain and anguish of those Kashmiris who have become refugees in their own motherland. The New Year is the time to heal their wounds. The Government will soon initiate talks with various representative groups in the State. We are prepared to take

further steps to respond to Jammu & Kashmir's deep longing for peace, normalcy and accelerated development.

In our search for a lasting solution to the Kashmir problem, both in its external and internal dimensions, we shall not traverse solely on the beaten track of the past. Rather, we shall be bold and innovative designers of a future architecture of peace and prosperity for the entire South Asian region. In this search, the sole light that will guide us is our commitment to peace, justice and the vital interests of the nation.

The Ayodhya issue is another problem from the past that we should not allow to remain unresolved too far into the future. It is a challenge to the collective wisdom of our society that we find a peaceful and amicable solution to this problem, sooner rather than later. I had consciously not commented on this issue for the past three years. However, I am sad to note that, when I was constrained to speak on the subject after the Opposition stalled the proceedings of Parliament for three days in a row, my comments were twisted and turned for no other reason but to gain political advantage.

Overnight I was transformed by a section of the media and the political class from a "moderate" to a "hard-liner". "Vajpayee Unmasked" they said, conveniently masking the fact that my long stint in public life is an open book. Worse still, a campaign was launched to create misgivings about me in the minds of our minority brethren.

I had hoped—and I am sure that most of our countrymen too had hoped—that my comprehensive replies to the debate, first in the Lok Sabha and then in the Rajya Sabha, would put an end to the controversy. Alas, that has not been the case. I must confess that I am pained by some of the comments, observations and speculations in the aftermath of the recent developments in Parliament. My political adversaries are entitled to disagree with me, but they will not be able to see any inconsistency in my views on the Ayodhya issue, all of which are well-recorded.

I have always held that there are only two ways to resolve this contentious issue: the judicial route or the route of negotiations leading to a mutually acceptable solution. I have stated that the Government will accept, and is Constitutionally bound to implement, the judiciary's verdict, whatever it might be. But this does not foreclose the need for negotiations in a non-governmental and non-political framework. The judicial route and the option of talks do not exclude, but are rather complementary to, one another.

Irrespective of what the judicial verdict might be, its smooth implementation would require a conducive social atmosphere. Resumption of talks between representatives of the two communities, conducted in an atmosphere of trust, goodwill and flexibility, has the potential to create such an atmosphere. The ongoing controversy over implementing the Supreme Court's verdict in the case of relocation of polluting industries out of Delhi has strikingly highlighted the need for a supportive social environment involving all the parties to a dispute.

Few can deny that Ram occupies an exalted place in India's culture. He is one of the most respected symbols of our national ethos. Respect for him transcends sectarian barriers. Many Indians revere him as an *avataar* of God and some regard him as *Maryada Purushottam*. Non-Hindus, too, see in him an ideal king and an embodiment of great human qualities. Had it not been so, Poet Allama Iqbal would not have penned the following eulogy to Ram.

*The cup of India has always overflowed*
*With the heady wine of truth.*
*Even the philosophers from the West*
*Are her ardent devotees.*
*There is something so sublime in her mysticism*
*That her star soars high above constellations.*
*There have been thousands of rulers in this land*
*But none can compare with Rama;*

*The discerning ones proclaim him*
*The spiritual leader of India.*
*His lamp gave the light of wisdom*
*Which outshone the radiance*
*Of the whole of humankind.*
*Rama was valiant, Rama was bold,*
*Rama yielded deftly his word,*
*He cared for the poorest of poor,*
*He was unmatched in love and compassion.*

No wonder, then, that the movement for construction of a Ram Temple at Ayodhya struck a supportive chord in more than one political party. Had it not been so, the government of late Rajiv Gandhi would not have taken the kind of specific steps it did to facilitate the construction of a Ram Temple at Ayodhya. Rajivji even inaugurated the Congress party's 1989 election campaign from the vicinity of Ayodhya with a promise to usher in Ram Rajya, which was also Mahatma Gandhi's dream. There was nothing communal about either Gandhiji's vision or Rajiv Gandhi's initiatives at Ayodhya.

This shows that there was no dispute over a Ram Temple at Ayodhya being an expression of the national sentiment, in the same way that reconstruction of a temple at Somnath too was recognized by the then Government as an expression of the national sentiment. (The Government of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had set up a committee for the reconstruction of Somnath Temple under the chairmanship of K.M. Munshi. Babu Rajendra Prasad, the then President, himself participated in the temple's inaugural function, calling Somnath a "symbol" of India's national culture.)

The only dispute at Ayodhya was over where and how. On this contentious matter, too, my views have been clear and consistent. I never stated that the temple should be built at the disputed site without either a judicial verdict or an amicable agreement between the two communities. This is how it should be in a law-governed country. I wish to make it absolutely

clear that the law will take its course, should any organization attempt to disturb the status quo. The Government will not remain a silent spectator and adopt delaying tactics, as unfortunately happened eight years ago.

In my reply to the debate in the Lok Sabha, I had stated that, in addition to Ram, many other personalities and places symbolize our national culture. Be it the Dargah of Ajmer Sharif or the Shrine of Nizamuddin Aulia in Delhi, the Golden Temple at Amritsar or the Church of St. Francis at Goa—these are all proud symbols of our syncretic national culture.

My statement that the movement for construction of a Ram Temple in Ayodhya *was* an expression of the national sentiment has been misrepresented in many ways. What is overlooked is the past tense that I had consciously used in my statement. In my reply to the debate in the Rajya Sabha, I had clearly stated that although the movement for the construction of a Ram Temple at Ayodhya was an expression of our national sentiment, this sentiment became narrow, and its inclusive character became restrictive, because of the unfortunate demolition of the disputed mosque structure on December 6,1992. A flagrant violation of the law, it certainly was. But it was also at totally variance with the Hindu ethos. The wrongs of a medieval past cannot be righted by a similar wrong in modern times.

The status quo at Kashi, Mathura and other disputed places of worship must remain undisturbed. Far from indicating the Hindu society's weakness, this will show the strength of our national ethos of tolerance and religious harmony.

Deeply saddening though that December Sunday was, we cannot forever remain shackled to the debate on demolitions, either of the distant or the recent past. India must move on. The best of India resides not in the past. Rather, it belongs to the future that we all must collectively build. Glorious though our past was, a more glorious destiny beckons India. However, its realization calls for a radical shift from contention

to conciliation, from discord to concord, and from confrontation to consensus and co-operative action.

How do we make this transition? I would like to share some more of my thoughts with my countrymen in another article tomorrow.

# Call of the New Year: Clear Vision, Concerted Action

IN MY ARTICLE yesterday, I had expressed some thoughts on the Kashmir question and the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute, the two problems that we have inherited from the past. Today I wish to share my vision of how we can leave a better legacy for our future generations.

I am one of those fortunate people in public life who have not only observed, but also participated in, the evolution of independent India from 1947 till now. As a student I had taken part in the Freedom Movement. As a young man of 22, I had seen our first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, unfurl the Tricolour at Red Fort at that immortal midnight hour on August 15. Little did I know that just after a decade I would be sitting with him in Parliament discussing and debating affairs of the nation. It is a tribute to the power of India's democracy that an ordinary man like me, son of a village teacher, has since been called upon to serve the nation as its Prime Minister. The days of dynasties are over in India's vibrant democracy.

When I look back at Free India's journey through the past five decades, I am filled with pride and disappointment in

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Musings on New Year (Part-II), Kumarakom, 2 January 2001

equal measure. Pride because we have been successful in preserving two ideals that are most precious to all of us: one, the unity of India; and two, our democratic system. This is not a mean achievement given the track record of many newly independent countries, including some in our own neighbourhood. Few countries in the world facing the kind of challenges of development and governance that India does, have so steadfastly continued on the democratic path. Similarly, few multi-religious, multi-lingual and multi-ethnic societies in the world have presented such an exemplary demonstration of unity in diversity as India has done.

On the developmental front, too, we have many proud achievements to our credit. All the governments of the past, belonging to different parties and coalitions, have contributed in their own way to India's self-reliant progress on several fronts. Many developing countries look up to India as an example for building indigenous policies and programmes for socio-economic development. We should never belittle India's achievements, as some people do. Such belittlement only serves to spread cynicism, apathy and inaction, qualities we must shun.

Nevertheless, I am as distressed as all my countrymen are at the wide gulf between India's indisputable potential and her actual performance. Nothing agonizes me more as the Prime Minister than the realization that millions of my countrymen, even after five decades of Independence, still do not have enough to eat and proper roofs to sleep under. Many have to suffer even for the lack of drinking water and basic medical care. If children are deprived of good food, good education and good upbringing, the loss is not only theirs and their families'; the nation too deprives itself of precious human resources for its all-round development.

We must change this reality, and we can. India does not lack the requisite natural resources to remove these basic developmental inadequacies. We also have a vast reservoir of talented and hard-working men and women. Many of those

who have gone abroad to work have scripted amazing success stories, earning high reputation for themselves and their motherland in their host countries. I often ask myself the question: If Indians can overcome all the odds and succeed spectacularly outside India, why can't we do so in India itself?

Yes, we can create prosperity for all. We can fully remove poverty, unemployment and all other traces of underdevelopment from India. What is needed is an inspiring national vision, a strong sense of purpose shared by all the citizens and communities of our diverse country, and a single-minded determination supported by concerted action to achieve what are identified as common national goals.

A nation attains greatness when it develops a strong national mind. All of us know that the power of the mind is immense. It is true about the individual mind, and also true about the national mind. When India was unfree, attainment of freedom was our single-minded national objective. Sadly, after Independence, we failed to mobilize our national energies for a similar single-minded pursuit of the goals of nation-building.

Our first task is to strengthen the awareness that we are one people—sisters and brothers who are children of the Great Mother India. Ours is a vast and varied country. Sometimes, however, we get so involved in our own narrow concerns and so obsessed with our own specific identities, that we tend to ignore the chief source of our national pride and strength—namely, India's diversity and her essential unity. Some of our citizens focus too much on one or the other aspect of our diversity, ignoring the common national bonds that unite us. Others ignore our diversity and, instead, tend to overemphasize only certain aspects of our national unity. In my view, both approaches are flawed.

Diversity does not permit divisiveness or exclusiveness. Similarly, unity cannot be achieved through uniformity.

In this context I must confess that the growing trend of intolerance which I see in our society today worries me deeply. This trend must be checked.

India belongs equally to all her citizens and communities, not more to some and less to others. At the same time, all citizens and communities have an equal duty to strengthen our national unity and integrity, and to contribute to the nation's progress. In recent times, there has been a tendency to focus more on one's rights, and less on one's duties. This must change.

Throughout her long history, India's unity is nurtured by an ethos of secularism that teaches all her people not only to tolerate each other's customs, traditions and beliefs, but also to respect them. Mutual tolerance and understanding leads to goodwill and co-operation, which in turn strengthens the silken bond of our national unity. Secularism is not an alien concept that we imported out of compulsion after Independence. Rather, it is an integral and natural feature of our national culture and ethos.

This being India's social truth, I find it both strange and disconcerting that our polity is sought to be divided between "secular" and "communal" parties. Indian people do not give their mandate to any party or a coalition that does not follow a secular, inclusive and integrative agenda. To think otherwise is to disparage our people's democratic intelligence.

Leaving non-issues behind, politics and governance in India should be redirected towards achieving faster, more balanced and more equitable socio-economic development. Our people's hunger for development is growing. However, the governmental machinery is not working fast enough to meet this hunger. Most often our people's demands are very simple and basic: better road connectivity, better drinking water and sanitation facilities, assured and adequate supply of power to farmers, etc.

Both the Central and State Governments have drawn up many policies and programmes to deliver these needs, for which significant resources are budgeted. The system of implementation, however, routinely lets us down. Those who suffer the most because of delayed and defective implementation

of policies, programmes and projects are invariably the poor and the underprivileged—especially Dalits, Adivasis and Backward Classes. This has been the experience both at the Centre and in States. And all parties that have been in power have experienced this major shortcoming in India's developmental strategy.

Therefore, the time has come to introduce radical developmental reforms, which should encompass, besides economic reforms, administrative and judicial reforms. The most important component of these reforms is to fix transparent accountability at all levels and increase people's involvement in monitoring the functioning of all agencies that impact on development. This is necessary to check corruption, which drains away so much of the budgetary resources of the Centre and the States. Development is too important a matter to be left to bureaucrats alone. People must be empowered not only to demand results, but also to actively participate in the attainment of results. This calls for a new partnership between the government and the people in consonance with the true spirit of democracy.

I need hardly add here that this places a far bigger responsibility on our citizens than has been realized by them so far. The habit of looking to the government for a solution to every problem must give way to a new democratic attitude of fully participating in the government's efforts and of maximizing the scope of non-governmental efforts. This calls for a better work culture, a superior civic culture, strong discipline, and a radical shift in the attitude of the citizenry from rights to duties. This also increases the responsibility of our elected representatives in Parliament, State Legislatures and Panchayati Raj institutions. They must act as good law-makers and effective overseers of the executive.

I have another thought to share with my countrymen. Some people, while talking about economic reforms, often raise voices of alarm and impending national crisis. Recalling how India became a colony of a foreign trading company in

the past, they prophesy that India will again be "sold out" to foreigners if economic reforms are allowed to be continued. This is a ludicrous prophecy. India is a free nation. It is a democratic nation governed by the will of the people. It is also an incomparably stronger nation today than when the British colonized us. Who can dare sell out today's India? And who can dare buy out today's India?

We have a vibrant and self-reliant economy. The true purpose of economic reforms is to further strengthen our economy, while removing its self-evident weaknesses, so that poverty and unemployment can be removed at a faster pace. As is well-known, these reforms have been pursued by all the governments at the Centre, and most State governments, since 1991. Nearly all political parties in the country have been a part of these governments. Thus, a strong basis for a national consensus on the agenda of reforms already exists. We must further strengthen this agenda by depoliticizing it.

We need to broaden and further accelerate the economic reforms, so that our economy becomes sufficiently productive to meet the growing demands of our growing population. But there is also an added urgency to this task. We are living in a world of globalization, created by the information and communication revolution, global trade and greater inter-dependence among nations. Today there is far greater open competition among the economies of nations around the world than was conceivable even a few decades ago. For example, when I heard the grievances of coconut and arecanut growers in Kerala in the past few days—and these are genuine grievances—I could clearly see the forces of globalization at work behind these seemingly local problems.

Neither Indian industry nor Indian agriculture can ignore the new competitive global environment in which they are called upon to operate. Our industry has to improve its manufacturing and management practices; our agriculture should be freed from many infrastructural, investment and other constraints that have prevented it from growing to its

full potential; we have to minimize the costs and maximize the quality of our products and we have to be better at marketing internationally.

We have to urgently improve our urban and rural infrastructure. The National Highway Project and the Rural Roads Project are two of the several important initiatives our government has taken in this direction. We have to create a better partnership between the government and the private sector. The private sector, whose scope in the nation's development is steadily increasing, must learn to work for public good rather than for narrow private gain. We must make all sectors of our economy more knowledge-intensive, beginning with a rapid introduction of Information Technology. We should bring greater efficiencies in our financial sector, so that the cost of capital in India comes down, especially for small-scale industries and businesses. We need to reduce the size of the government, so that more resources can be channelled for people's welfare and development. We must also reform our labour laws, and make them more conducive to faster economic growth and greater employment generation. Some of these are difficult measures, but we cannot shirk away from any of these imperatives.

Our government will, of course, take necessary measures to protect the national interests against unfair trade and investment practices from outside. But it is high time all sections of our industry, agriculture and services sector realized that, increasingly, these issues are being governed by a multilateral framework, to which India is a signatory. This global framework has created challenges, opportunities and also obligations. This new reality cannot be wished away by any party or government. It is our collective responsibility to devise a national strategy that effectively counters the challenges and seizes the opportunities of globalization. This is too important an issue for India's future economic development to be politicized for narrow, short-term gains.

Dear countrymen, I see immense opportunities for India's

all-round progress in the New Century. I am also full of hope that our people will seize these opportunities. My hopes are especially pinned on our youth, who today constitute nearly two-thirds of our population. Indeed, India has the highest number of young people in the world today. We are inheritors of a ancient civilization which is also forever young. Guided by the light of the eternal and universal values of our civilization, inspired by a modernizing vision of national development, and powered by the youthful energy of one billion children of Bharat Mata, we can certainly make the 21st Century India's Century.

This is the hope and this is the New Year resolve that I wish to convey to all of you from Kumarakom.

# Give Our People the Right Information

I AM HAPPY to be here with you this morning at this State Information Ministers' Conference. This is a useful forum that provides an opportunity to all of you, and to the Ministers for Information and Broadcasting and her officials, to exchange information and experience with one another on a wide range of issues that are vital to the Central and State Governments, and to the people at large.

India is a Union of States. The framers of our Constitution rightly designed a far-sighted federal architecture, in which certain subjects were vested with the Centre, certain subjects with the States, and many others were placed on the Concurrent List. This design was perfectly suited to meet the democratic

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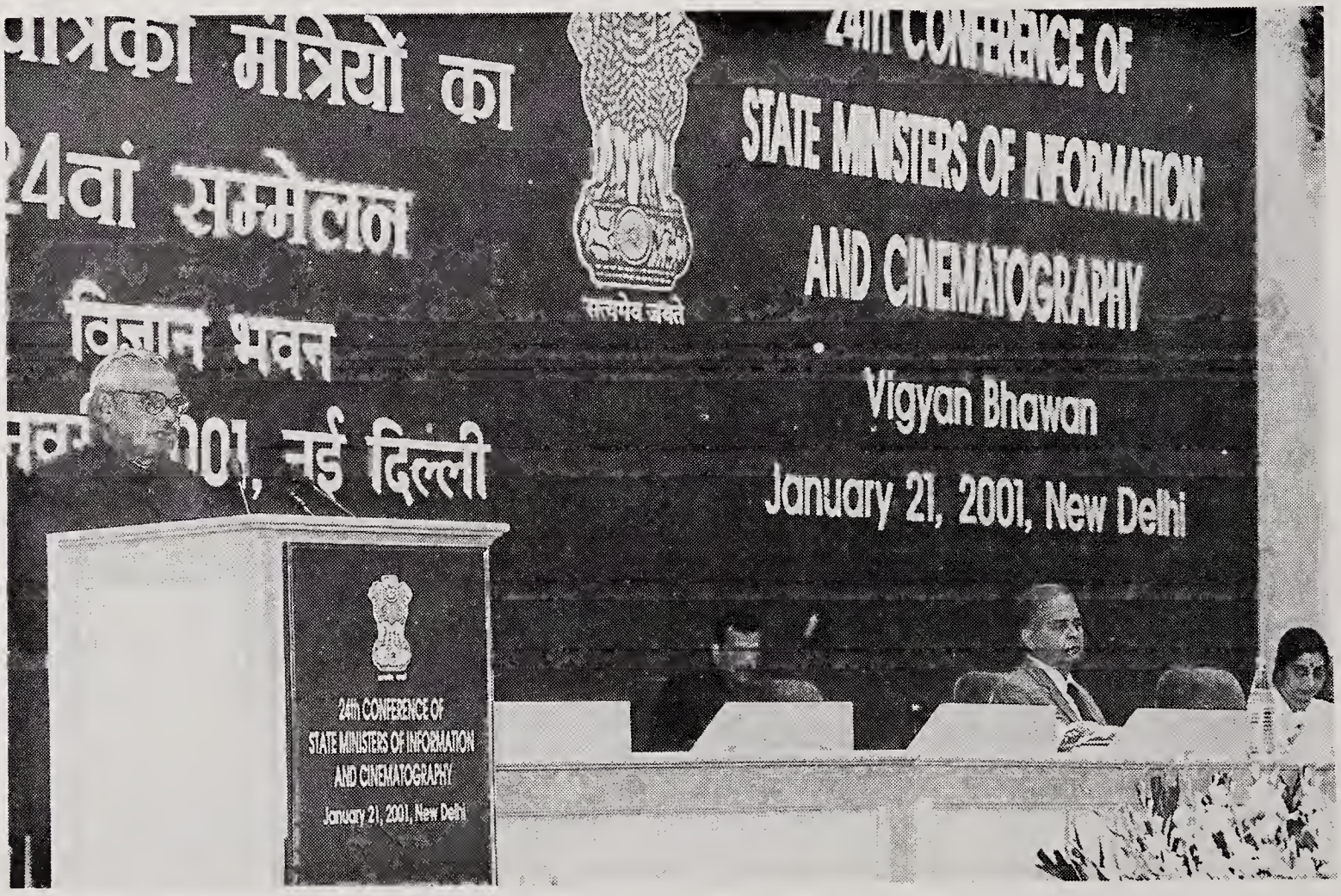
Speech at the State Information Ministers' Conference, New Delhi, 21 January 2001

aspirations of the people in our large and diverse country. It was also aimed at creating such a harmonious relationship between the Centre and the States as would make our democracy an effective instrument of all-round development.

I, therefore, attach a great importance to regular and close interaction between the Centre and the States, and amongst States themselves. Such interaction is all the more important in the area of information and communication. Information is power. This is not mere rhetoric, but a profound truth. It is also equally true that lack of information can be a serious liability.

Give our people the right information, useful information, and we will see that they become our greatest asset in implementing our policies and programmes. But deprive them of the information that they need, or make them dependent on sources of distorted or false information, and we will see how even our best plans can get bogged down.




*Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee speaking at the 24th Conference of State Ministers of Information, New Delhi, 21 January 2001*

Information is our people's fundamental democratic right. To empower them with it is the fundamental duty of governments.

Dear Ministers, in discharging this duty, I cannot overemphasize the need for the Centre and the State governments to work together with the highest degree of co-operation and co-ordination. I must also note that such a co-ordinated approach is sometimes lacking.

Both the Centre and the State governments have, over a period, created large establishments to conduct their respective publicity activities. Many of the developmental policies and programmes of the Centre and the States are closely inter-related. This is especially true in the social sector. Most of the schemes in education, health care, and social welfare are implemented by State governments, even though the Centre may provide budgetary assistance to them.

Hence, it is self-evident that the success of such developmental policies and programmes hinges critically on how the Centre and the States conduct their publicity efforts in an effective and co-ordinated manner. What I find is that there is a big scope for improving both the level of co-ordination and the quality of publicity, at the Centre, as well as in States.

The organizations at the Centre should do more to highlight the success and achievements of various States, since no individual State government has the infrastructure to do so in other States. Similarly, the publicity outfits of the States should give due projection to the Centre's developmental initiatives.

For example, as you know, we have recently launched some major programmes in the social sector and rural development, such as the National Rural Roads Programme and the *Antyodaya Anna Yojana*. There is also an earlier scheme called the *Annapurna Yojana,* under which old people in poor families are to be given free foodgrains. Even though these are initiatives of the Centre, they are necessarily to be implemented by State governments.

Unfortunately, information about many such developmental schemes, be they of the Centre or the States, does not always reach the common people, especially in rural and remote areas. When people have no information, they can hardly participate in their implementation or monitor their progress. In the absence of people's participation, such programmes are invariably implemented in the usual bureaucratic manner.

This breeds corruption, inefficiency, and lack of accountability. As a result, common people become cynical about governmental programmes and schemes. I have often heard complaints from even MPs and MLAs that they too are not involved in the implementation process. If such is the complaint of our MPs and MLAs, one can imagine how members of Panchayati Raj institutions must be feeling.

Friends, we cannot leave the fate of our policies and programmes, in which we spend thousands of crores of rupees each year, to the care of the bureaucracy alone. The active participation of the people, and of people's elected representatives is a must for the success of all our developmental endeavours. The ministries of information at the Centre and in States have a vital role in correcting this imbalance.

I have another thought to share with you today. The publicity efforts of the Centre and the States on all developmental programmes must be made in an integrated manner so that a single motivating message reaches the people. In doing so, there should be no scope for party politics or any kind of partisan considerations.

As you know, our government at the Centre has scrupulously followed the principles of fairness and justice in our dealing with all the States. Indeed, I can say with much satisfaction that the Centre-State relations now are more harmonious than at any time in the recent past.

The point that I wish to drive home is simply this. We should look at India as one integral unit—as integral and organic as the human body is. The nation is healthy and dynamic when all the various limbs and organs of this national body are healthy, receive sustenance from one and all, and

work in unison with a common purpose.

I think that it is primarily the responsibility of the Information ministries of the Centre and the States to communicate this vision to our people. It is also primarily their responsibility to make the implementation machineries of the Central and State governments to carry this national vision in all their activities.

Before I conclude, I must point out that various instruments of publicity that we have, must become more professional in their outlook and functioning. Most of them, such as Doordarshan, AIR, DAVP, PIB, were created in the early decades of Independence, when the government was almost the only source of information, barring privately owned newspapers. Today, the situation is totally different. Several TV channels have begun to operate even in regional languages.

In such a crowded and competitive media environment, it is a real challenge before governmental publicity outfits to carry the right information and message to the people. I would urge this conference to deliberate seriously on this issue and chalk out a plan to suitably revamp all our organizations to respond to today's challenges. It is also necessary to retrain the people working in these organizations. Effective communication needs innovation, creativity, and commitment. It cannot be done in a routine and unimaginative way, as is often the case today.

In this effort at reorientation, we should make full use of the new and powerful tools of information technology. These tools, such as the Internet, have made communication not only cheaper, but also vastly increased the power of communication. It is especially necessary to increase the use of these tools in all our non-English languages.

I see from your agenda papers that you have a lot of issues to discuss, including matters pertaining to the important areas of films and cinematography. I am sure that your deliberations will be fruitful.

With these words, I inaugurate your conference and wish it success.

# Responsible Press—An Important Pillar of the Nation

IT GIVES ME great pleasure to be with you at this prestigious assembly of eminent journalists from around the world, under the aegis of the International Press Institute. I am especially heartened by the fact that you chose to hold your Congress at a time that coincided with the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Indian Republic. I hope you enjoyed watching the Republic Day Parade yesterday.

The celebration of our Republic is also, in some ways, a celebration of our free press. India is proud to have one of the freest media in the world. The number and diversity of the media outlets in English and other languages in our country, the sheer range of views and opinions expressed in them, the large and well-protected space for dissent and criticism, and, lately, their growing technological sophistication—all these have earned for the Indian press an honoured place on the global media map.

Your choice of the timing of the IPI Congress may be a coincidence of the calendar. However, at a deeper level, there is a profound conceptual interconnection between the two events. A free and responsible press is an important pillar of the Republican architecture—as essential for a healthy democracy as the legislature or the judiciary.

I wish to lay special emphasis on the two defining qualities of the press—freedom and responsibility. The press is either free, or it cannot be called the press at all. Freedom of thought and the right to information are a fundamental human right. What turns this abstract ideal into a force of democratic empowerment is the free press.

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Speech while inaugurating the International Press Institute Congress, New Delhi, 27 January 2001

Free flow of information and ideas, effected by newspapers, magazines and journals, radio, television, and now the Internet, pulls down the most elaborate barriers for self-protection erected by authoritarian regimes of all ideologies and labels. The triumphant march of democracy in several parts of the world in recent decades was catalyzed, largely, by the media.

Thus, journalists are the torchbearers of democracy and I am honoured to add my own personal welcome to the most eminent representatives of the global journalistic community who have come to India for this Congress.

Friends, responsibility is the flip side of freedom. The media commands an extraordinary power to do good or bad, because of its capacity to influence events and minds. Therefore, the media cannot be value-neutral. It must reflect a strong sense of social responsibility, and an ability to distinguish between right and wrong. If the media expects—and rightly so—accountability from governments, political parties, businesses and private individuals, it too must offer itself to be judged by the same norms of accountability.

Beyond the minimum reasonable restrictions imposed by any democratic country, it is entirely up to the media organizations, and the people working in them, to define the content and contours of responsibility. News, entertainment, and other products of the media are not like other commodities in the market. Sensationalism and other tactics to "sell" them with the sole motive to maximize profits militate against the very essence of journalism. On the other hand, self-monitoring, self-regulation and, when necessary, even self-censorship, enhance the credibility of the media, which is its most precious asset.

Distinguished media persons, I have been a journalist myself at some time—though a long time ago—in my life. In later years, my experience in politics and governance has given me some understanding of international relations. I often ask myself: What is the role of journalists and media organizations

in reporting, analyzing, and commenting on the affairs of this Global Family?

The forces of globalization and technology have vastly enlarged the reach of the media in the new century. The birth of the information and communication revolution has brought about a phenomenon that one journalist has vividly described as "The Death of Distance". For the first time in the known history of mankind, we can see the making of "One World"—a united, integral, and interdependent world.

This phenomenon has vastly increased people's expectations from the media. In this global family, the community of journalists is rightly called the "Brotherhood of Words". Words and images have power—power to enlighten, power to motivate, power to heal, and power to bring people closer together. Therefore, journalists everywhere should rise above narrow considerations and promote the bonds of mutual understanding and solidarity both within and among the nations of the world.

Media organizations with a global reach have a special role in our times. The astonishing diversity of cultures and traditions, and the rich plurality of thoughts, in different parts of the world are often overshadowed, if not blacked out, by what the dominant media choose to portray. The glaring inequities and imbalances in the global media make it almost impossible for poor and developing nations to tell their story in their own words to the rest of the world.

Diversity of faiths, cultures, ethnicity, and language are a source of strength—and not of weakness—for mankind. As more and more countries around the world begin to reflect these diversities in the new century, because of the increased movement of people and information, it is all the more necessary for the media to be democratic and representative.

There is another thought that I would like to share with you. Various nations of the world are today engaged in a race

to achieve economic prosperity. This is a legitimate objective. The new century must not carry forward the problems of underdevelopment created by the previous centuries. The forces of science, technology, and global co-operation have indeed made it possible for us to achieve this objective.

However, I sometimes worry that, in the race for economic development, the world is ignoring the main agent and beneficiary of science and technology, trade and investment, namely, man. We need to humanize economic development. We need to make man and his deepest aspirations for self-fulfilment and fellowship the focus of all our efforts. Here, too, journalists have an important role to play.

Friends, before I conclude, I would like to dwell briefly on what you, as the leading representatives of the international media, might want to know about the direction in which India is moving. Our democracy is growing in maturity. Multi-party coalition governments are proving to be stable and successful. More and more sections of our diverse society, which were earlier under-represented, have found a voice and a place in our electoral and governance systems. Very soon, we shall bring forward an important legislation for women's reservation in our Parliament and State Legislatures.

Ours is a multi-religious, multi-lingual, and multi-ethnic nation. The rights of religious minorities are fully protected. We believe that India's demonstration of unity in diversity is, in many ways, useful to the entire world in the age of globalization.

Today our top priority is to achieve faster and more balanced economic growth, so that the fruits of development can reach every one of our billion-plus citizens. To achieve this objective, we have, during the past decade, embarked on an ambitious programme of economic reforms. There is a broad consensus over these reforms across the political spectrum.

Ours is one of the fastest growing economies in the world, and we are confident that India will grow even faster in the coming years. In a very short time, India has emerged as a leading power in Information Technology. We are taking many conscious steps to ensure that we not only overcome the challenge of "Digital Divide", but actually bring "Digital Dividends" to all sections of our population.

In the international arena, India is following an active policy aimed at establishing friendly and co-operative relations with all countries in the world, especially in our neighbourhood. South Asia needs peace, as it will bring the fruits of prosperity and security to all the countries and peoples in this region, who account for one-fifth of the world's population.

There is now growing international recognition that a democratic and rapidly developing India is a positive force for peace, stability, security, and co-operation in Asia and the world. The evolution of this New India in the new century is a big media story. I invite all of you to explore this exciting story and report it to the world community.

With these words, I convey my felicitations to the 51st Congress of the International Press Institute. May all of you have a pleasant and memorable stay in India.

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